TWELVE

SOUL-WINNING SERMONS

BY

C. H. SPURGEON

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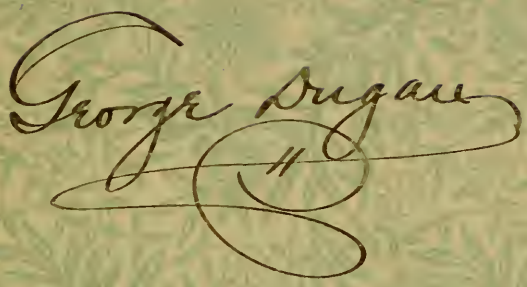

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THEOLOGICAL

SOUL-WINNING SERMONS.

DELIVERED
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE.

BY

C. H. SPURGEON.

: : Fleming H. Revell : :

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THE AUTHOR TO THE READER.

FRIENDS frequently write me, requesting information as to which of my sermons they could distribute with the greatest hope of doing good thereby. To answer that question I have made this selection of twelve from the sixteen hundred and sixty of my printed discourses; and they are bound together here just as they were issued in the first instance, without regard to consecutive paging. These discourses have been already sealed with the highest approval, for they have been used by the Holy Spirit to lead many to Jesus. The thought of making this selection came to me in my illness, and I have comforted myself with the idea that these soul-saving sermons may thus enter upon a new career of usefulness. I trust it may be so, and that they will go forth still further afield to gather home the lost sheep.

C. H. SPURGEON.

NOTICE.—Any of the separate sermons in this volume may be had of the publishers at the rate of 35 cents per dozen copies, or $2.00 per hundred. If sent by mail, postage extra 3 cents per dozen, or 25 cents per hundred. *Not less than 12 copies of any one sermon* will be supplied at these rates.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

COMING—ALWAYS COMING.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"To whom coming."—1 Peter ii. 4.

THE apostle is speaking of the Lord Jesus, of whom he had previously said, "If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious," and he follows that sentence up with this, "To whom coming as unto a living stone." Now, I want to call your special attention to this present participle—this act of coming—for there is much to counsel and to comfort us in the fact and the reflections it suggests.

The Christian life is begun, continued, and perfected altogether in connection with the Lord Jesus Christ. This is a very great blessing for us. Sometimes when you go a journey, you travel so far under the protection of a certain Company, but then you have to change, and the rest of your journey may be performed under very different circumstances, upon quite another kind of line. Now we have not so far to go to heaven in the guardian care of Jesus Christ, and then at a certain point to change, so as to have somebody else to be our leader, or some other method of salvation. No, he is the author and he is the finisher of our faith. If we begin aright we begin with "Christ is all"; if we go on aright we go on with "Christ is all"; and if we finish aright we finish with "Christ is all." It was a great delusion of some in Paul's day that after they had begun in the spirit, they hoped to be made perfect in the flesh; and there are some now a days who begin as sinners resting upon Christ, but they want to go on as independent saints, resting on themselves. That will never do, brethren. It is not "Christ and Company" anyhow. The sinner knows that it must be Christ only, because he has nothing of his own; and the saint ought to know that it must be Christ only, because he has less than nothing apart from Christ. I believe that if we grow out of Christ we grow in an unhealthy mushroom fashion: what we need is to grow up into Christ in all things, knowing him more and more, and being more and more satisfied that he is what we need. This is really a healthy growth, and may God send

more and more of it to us as long as ever we live. Blessed be his holy name, with us it is Christ in the morning, when we are young and full of strength; it is Christ at noon, when we are bearing the burden and heat of the day; and it is Christ at eventide, when we lean on the staff for very age, and the shadows lengthen, and the light is dim. Yea, and it shall be Christ only when the night settles down and death-shade curtains our last bed. In all circumstances and conditions we look to Jesus only. Are we in wealth? Christ crowns it. Are we in poverty? Christ cheers it. Are we in honour? Christ calms us. Are we in shame? Christ consoles us. Are we in health? He sanctifies it. Are we in sickness? He relieves it. As he is at all times the same in himself so he is the same to us. To the same Christ we must come and cling under every new circumstance. Our heart must abide faithful to her one only Lord and lovingly sing,—

> "I'll turn to thee in days of light
> As well as nights of care,
> Thou brightest amid all that's bright,
> Thou fairest of the fair!"

We have not to seek a fresh physician, to find a new friend, or to discover a novel hope, but we are to look for everything to Jesus Christ, "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." "Ye are complete in him." Stand to this, my brethren. Never think that you need aught beyond the provision which is stored up in him, for sanctification, for satisfaction, or for safety. Cast not your eyes around you to find a supplement to the Lord Jesus, or you will deceive yourselves and dishonour him. It is not with our Lord as it was with Moses. Moses led the people through the wilderness, but he could not bring them into the promised land: that was reserved for Joshua. Brother, the Lord Jesus has led you so far through the wilderness, and he will lead you over the Jordan, and secure your heritage to you, and see you safely landed in it: look not, therefore, for any other leader or lawgiver. It is not with Christ as it was with David: David collected the materials for the temple, but though he could gather together vast stores of great value, he could not build them up, for the Lord said that this honour should be reserved for his son that should be after him; and therefore the construction of the temple was left for Solomon. But our Lord Jesus Christ, blessed be his name, has not only gathered together his people and the precious treasures with which he is to build a living temple unto God; but he will also build it stone upon stone, and bring forth the top stone with shouting. He shall build the temple of the Lord, and he shall bear the glory. Christ in the Christian's alphabet is A, B, C right down to Z, and all the words of the pure language of Canaan are only compounds of himself. Has he not said it, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end"?

Our text speaks about coming to him, and I shall endeavour to expound it to you thus. *This is a full picture of Christian life.* I consider it to be a complete picture of a saint drawn with one stroke. It is not easy to make a portrait with one line, yet I remember seeing a somewhat famous portrait of our Lord in which the artist never lifted his pencil from the paper from beginning to end, but drew the whole of it with one continuous series of circles. So here I may say the whole Christian life

is drawn in one line—coming unto Christ. "To whom coming." When we have spoken upon that, I shall answer two questions; the one—*what is the best way of coming to him at first?* the other—*what is the best way of coming to him afterwards?* May the Holy Spirit bless the whole discourse to our souls.

I. First, then, HERE IS A COMPLETE DESCRIPTION OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. It is a continuous "coming" to Jesus.

If you have your Bibles open at the text I want you to notice that the expression occurs in connection with two figures. There is one which precedes it in the second verse, namely, the figure of *a little child* fed upon milk. "As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. To whom coming." Children come to their parents, and they frequently come rather longer than their parents like; it is the general habit of children to come to their parents for what they need. They begin with coming to the mothers when they are new-born babes. Look at the little child; it cannot provide for itself. If it were left to shift for itself it must die; but having tasted the unadulterated milk, it thirsts for more of it. When the time comes round for it to be fed, and it comes very often, it gives unmistakeable signs even before it can speak that it wants its food; it knows where to come, and it will not rest till it reaches its place and nestles down. As the child grows up it knows the breakfast hour, and the dinner hour, and knows where to come for the grateful meal and the hearty welcome. You do not want in most of your houses, I suspect, to ring a bell to call your children together to the family table: they all carry little interior bells which let them know pretty accurately when meal-times will be, and they come freely, without persuading or forcing. Some of them are now getting to be fifteen or sixteen years of age, and they keep on coming still. They come to your table just as they used to come. When first you had to lift them into their little chairs then they were coming; and now they take their big chairs as if they quite belonged to them; but they still keep on coming. Yes, and they come to you not only for bread and for meat, but they come for a great many things besides. In fact, the older they grow, the more they come for. They used to come for little shoes and little garments, and now they need them cut of a larger size, and of more expensive material, and they come accordingly. Though they cost you more they come with greater freedom, for habit has made them very bold in their coming. They do not require any entreaty or encouragement to come for what they want: they look for many things as a matter of course, and for the rest they come with all the readiness imaginable. Perhaps they let you know their desires a little sooner than you want them to do, and when you think that they might manage a little longer with what they have, they press their claims with earnestness, and vote them urgent. They very soon find out their requirements, you never have to call them together and say, "Now girls, I want you earnestly to consider whether you do not want more dresses. Now boys, I want you to lay it to heart whether you do not require new clothes." Oh, nothing of the sort. Your children do not need to be called in such a way; they come without calling. They are always coming for something, as you very well know. Sometimes they

constrain you to put your hands into your pockets so frequently and for such a variety of expenses that you wonder how long the purse will hold out, and when your resources will be exhausted. Of one thing you feel quite sure that it will be easier to drain your purse than to stop your children from coming for one thing or another.

They come to you now for a great many things they did not come for at first. It seems that there is no end to the things they come for, and I believe there is no end at all. Some of them, I know, continue to come after they have got beyond their boyish years. Though you have a notion, I suppose, that they might shift for themselves, they are still coming for sovereigns where shillings used to suffice. When you could put them to bed at night with the reflection that you had found them in food and raiment, and house and home, you knew your expenses; but now the big fellows come to you with such heavy demands that you can hardly see the end of it. So it is; they are always coming.

Now, in all this long talk I have been showing you how to understand the figure of coming to Christ. Just what your children began to do from the first moment you fixed your eyes on them, and what they have continued to do ever since, that is just what you are to do with the Lord Jesus Christ. You are to be always coming to him—coming to him for spiritual food, coming to him for spiritual garments, coming to him for washing, guiding, help, and health: coming in fact for everything. You will be wise if, the older you grow, the more you come, and he will be all the better pleased with you. If you find out other wants and make clearer discoveries of your needs, come for more than you used to come for, and prove thereby that you better understand and appreciate what manner of love it is—that ye should be called the sons of God. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Has he not said to you, "Open your mouth wide and I will fill it"? It is rather strange that you never have to tell your children to do that. They do it without any telling; but you have been told to do it, and yet you do not do it. He complains, "thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob." The infinite liberality of your heavenly Father has urged you to make great requests of him, and yet you have stuttered and stammered and been afraid to ask, until he now tells you that "you have not because you ask not." Beloved, let us learn from our children, and let it be the habit of our lives to be incessantly coming to the heavenly Father—coming oftener, coming for more reasons, coming for larger blessings, coming with greater expectations, coming in one life-long perpetual coming, and all because he bids us come.

If you will look again at your Bibles, you will get a second illustration from the fourth verse, "To whom coming as unto *a living stone*, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." Here we have the figure of a building. A building comprises first a foundation, and then the stones which are brought to the foundation and are built upon it. This furnishes a very beautiful picture of Christian life. I have read that there has been discovered beneath Jerusalem an immense cavern or quarry near the Damascus gate. Travellers who have been into this

quarry say that there are niches in the live rock out of which the magnificent stones were cut with which Solomon's temple was built. The temple is up there on the top of the rock, and then far down in the quarry you can distinctly discover where the huge stones used to be. Now there was a process of *coming* by which each stone came to the foundation. Some stones that were expected to form part of the building never reached it: there is one huge stone of that sort in the Bezetha cavern now. It is still there, for this reason—that, though it is squared and chiselled on the front and two sides, and also on the top and the bottom, yet it has never been cut away at the back, and so it cleaves to the rock of which it is naturally a part, and remains in its original darkness. Now, the passage that I would like you to think of is that in the fifty-first chapter of Isaiah—"Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged." There are many here present who have been cut off from the rock, and lifted up out of the horrible pit; since which early operation of divine grace they have been coming and coming till they have reached the foundation, and are built up as lively stones in the temple which is established upon Christ. But there are others of you who need further excavating. God has begun his work upon you, he has used sharp tools, and begun to separate you from the world: it has taken a long time to get you cut away from the rock, even in part. You used to be altogether sinful and earth-bound, and you lived in worldliness, just as the stone formed a part of the rock; God has been using his great chisel upon you, and cut you away, and separated you to a great extent from your fellow men; but still at the back, in secret, your heart cleaves to sin. You have not given up the darling lust of your heart and therefore you are not quarried yet, and you cannot come to Christ, for that is impossible till you are separated from the rock of which you naturally form a part. Oh, how I wish that almighty grace would take the saw of the word to-night, and make clear cuts right across your stony heart until you are sawn right adrift from the hard rock of sin, that you may afterwards be made to come to Christ to be built upon him as your foundation. That is how the work of grace begins,—by cutting loose the soul from the evil world of which it has been a component part. This is part of the process by which the living stones are brought to rest on the foundation, for it is clear that they cannot come to the foundation till first they are removed from their native bed in the pit of sin. Oh, may God's grace continue to take out many of this congregation like stones divided from the quarry, that so by grace they may come to Jesus.

Well, after they had cut out those stones in the quarry, which, with a little imagination, you can see lying there, detached and distinct, the next operation was to pull them up to the top of Mount Zion. It was a long drag up to the summit of the hill. How Solomon managed to remove such enormous masses we do not know. If he had no machinery or motive force that could supersede manual labour, and the force on which he relied was in the sinews of men, the matter is all the more wonderful. They must have pulled away perhaps many thousands of them at one single stone, hauling it out of the pit, dragging it up the zigzag roads till at last the gigantic mass reached its place. Now, there is a lifting, a drawing of the soul to Christ after this fashion, and I see

among you some who have recently been drawn. You have not been dragged by men. All the men in the world could not draw a sinner to Christ. No machinery is known or will ever be invented that can ever draw a proud, stubborn will to Christ. We may tug and pull till we break the ropes, but we shall never make a soul stir one inch Christward. But there is another power which can accomplish the work impossible to us. "I, if I be lifted up," says Christ, "will draw all men unto me." He has such attractive power that he draws the stones out of the quarry of nature, right up to the foundation which his free grace has laid in Zion, and they are built upon him. This is the second part of the work of grace in the soul; first it separates us from the rock, and then it draws us up to the foundation, and in both it is working out our coming to Christ.

Well, we have watched the stone as it has been carried up. What is the next process? Why, the next work is to let it down, so that it lies in due order upon the foundation. The foundation of the temple very likely was far below the adjacent soil; and so this mass of stone had to be let down to the foundation steadily and wisely that it might rest in its proper bed. What a task it is sometimes—to let a huge stone down upon the foundation, and to get it to lie square and true, so that every bit of it is in proper position with the rest of the structure. Picture the process to your mind's eye. We have got the stone upon the base, but half of it projects beyond the foundation, and so far it has nothing to lean upon. That will never do. It must be moved till it lies plumb with the foundation, exactly square with the other stones, and till every portion of it rests firmly on its proper bed. Oh, dear hearts, this is one work which the grace of God has to do with you—to bring you to lie upon Christ, to recline upon Christ, and that wholly, rightly, and squarely. It takes a long time to bring some sinners to this; they want to be propped up with a little bit of self-righteousness, they cannot be induced to lie right square upon Christ; they want to tilt a little, have a little shoring up with their own doings, and a little dependence on themselves: but this will never do. "To whom coming," says the text, "coming as to a living stone." Oh, that almighty grace would constrain you all to be coming till you lie flat and square on Christ, till you have Christ at one corner, and Christ at the other corner, and Christ at all the four corners whereon your soul lies; till you are resting on the Lord Jesus Christ at all times, in all respects, under all circumstances, for everything. Other foundation can no man lay; be ye sure that ye rest wholly upon it.

"Bless the Lord," says one, "I know I have come as far as that. Can I get any farther?" Well, look brother, as long as ever that huge stone lies on the foundation it is always coming to the foundation. Its own weight is always pressing it down upon the foundation, and the heavier it is the more closely and compactly it lies. I do feel myself, now, to be more close to Christ than ever I was. My weight of sin helps to press me down on him. My weight of trouble, my weight of care, my weight of anxiety about the souls of my hearers, and even my weight of joy, all help me to press more on my Lord. The way to be coming to Christ, brethren, as long as ever you live, is to lean more on Christ, press more heavily on Christ, and depend more upon Christ than ever

you did. In this way, you know, some stones seem, by long abiding and pressing, to cleave to one another, and unite together till they appear to be no longer distinct, but one mass. Have you not often noticed in an old Roman wall that you cannot distinguish the mortar from the stone? You cannot tell where the stones were joined; they have grown to be one piece. And blessed is that Christian who, like a living stone, has continued so to come to the foundation till Christ and he have become one, as it were: yea, one in conscious fact, so that nothing can divide them. Thus we continue still to come to Jesus, and draw nearer to him; nearer and yet nearer still, built up into him, perfectly joined in one spirit. Then, only then, shall Christian life be perfected.

These two figures of the babe and the stone have shown you, I trust, what the text means. I have not gone far afield to find them—they lie, as you have seen, in the immediate context. "To whom coming" is an apt description of the whole of Christian life: mind that you make it the rule of yours.

II. But now, secondly, I have to ANSWER THE QUESTION, *what is the best way of coming to Christ at first?*

There are some poor hearts among you longing to be saved. "Ah," you say, "I hear that if I come to Christ I shall be saved; but how can I come to him? What do you mean by coming to Jesus?" Well, our reply is plain and clear,—it is to trust Christ, to depend upon him, to believe him, to rely upon him. Then they enquire, "But how can I come to Christ? In what way would you recommend me to come?" The answer is, the very best way to come to Christ is to *come with all your needs about you.* If you could get rid of half your needs apart from Christ, you would not come to Jesus half so well as you can with the whole of them pressing upon you, for your need furnishes you with motives for coming, and gives you pleas to urge. Suppose *a physician* should come into a town with motives of pure benevolence to exercise the healing art. What he wants is not to make money, but to bless the townsmen: he does not intend to make any charge or take any fees, but he lets it be known that he has come into the town to display his skill. He has a love to his fellow men, and he wants to cure them, and therefore he gives notice that as he only wishes for opportunities of displaying his kindness and skill, the poorest will be welcome, and the most diseased will be best received. Now, then, who is the man that can come to the doctor's door with confidence, and give a good rat-tat-tat, and feel that he will be welcome? Well, there is a person who has cut his finger: will the doctor rush into the surgery to attend to him? No doubt he will look at the cut, but he will not grow very enthusiastic over it, for doctors do not get much credit out of curing cut fingers. Here is another gratis patient who has a wart on his hand. Well, there is nothing very famous about curing warts, and the physician is by no means excited over his work. But here is a poor forlorn body who has been given up by all the other doctors, a patient who is so bad that he lies at death's door: he has such a complication of diseases, that he could hardly tell what diseases he has *not* suffered from, but certainly his condition is terrible enough to make it appear hopeless. He seems to be a living wonder of disease. That is the man who may

come boldly to the physician, and expect his immediate attention, and his best consideration. Now, doctor, if you can cure this man he will be a credit to you. This man exactly answers to your advertisement. You say that you only wish for patients who will give you an opportunity of displaying your skill. Here is a fine object for your pity, he is bad at the lungs, bad at the heart, bad in the feet, bad in the eyes, bad in the ears, bad in the head, bad all over. If you want an opportunity of showing your skill, here is the man. Jesus, my Lord and Master, is the Great Physician of souls, and he heals them on just such terms as I have mentioned. Is there a fargone sinner here to-night? Is there a deeply sin-sick soul anywhere within the range of my voice? Is there man or woman who is bad altogether? Come along, my friend, you are just in a right condition to come to Jesus Christ. *Come just as you are*, that is the best style of "coming."

Another illustration may be furnished by the common scriptural figure of *a feast*. A king determines to act with generosity; and, to show how liberal his disposition is, he desires to make a banquet for those who need it most. He says, "If I make a great feast to my lords and dukes, they will think little of my hospitality, for they fare sumptuously every day; therefore I will seek out guests who will be more likely to be grateful. Where shall I find guests who will most enjoy my dainties, men who will eat with the greatest gusto, and drink with the greatest delight?" Having considered the matter, he cries to his heralds, "Go ye into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in." From among the tramps by the roadside the heralds soon gather starving wretches who exactly meet the king's wishes. Here is a poor man who has had nothing to eat for the last forty-eight hours. Look at his eager delight at the sight of the food! If you want somebody to eat largely and joyfully, is not he the man? See how he takes it in! It is wonderful how the provisions disappear before him! Here again is a poor woman who has been picked up by the wayside, faint for want of bread. She has scarcely any life in her, but see how she begins to open her eyes at the first morsel that is placed before her, and what delight there is in her every expression as she finds herself placed at a table so richly loaded. Yes, the poorer, the more hungry, the more destitute the guests, the more honour is accorded to the king who feeds such mendicants, and receives such vagrants to his table. Hear how they shout the king's praises when they are filled with his meat! They will never have done thanking him. Now, if I address a soul to-night that is very needy, very faint, very desponding, you are a fit guest for my Master, because you have such a fine appetite for his generous repast of love. The greatness of your need is your fitness for coming to Christ, and if you want to know how to come, come just as you are. Tarry not to improve yourself one single atom; come as you are, with all your sin and filthiness and need about you, for that is the best way to come.

If you want to know how to come aright the first time, I should answer, *come to find everything you want in Christ*. Do not come with a load of your own wealth. Remember what Pharaoh said to Joseph; "Also regard not your stuff; for the good of all the land of Egypt is yours." Do not bring your old rubbish with you. "I thought I was to bring repentance." Do not attempt to do so, but look to Jesus for it. Jesus

Christ is exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins. Come and receive a heart of flesh, for you cannot make one for yourself. "Oh, but I thought I was to bring faith." Faith also is the gift of Christ. It cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God; draw near then to that word to find faith. Come for everything. "Oh, but I want to feel." And then, I suppose, after you have found a nice lot of feelings you will come to Christ, and say, "Lord, thou art now able to save me, for my feelings are right." What self-conceit! Come to Christ for feelings; come to Christ for everything.

"What," saith one, "can you mean it, that I, an unfeeling, impenitent wretch, am bidden to come at once and believe in Jesus Christ for everlasting life?" I mean just that. I do not mean to send you round to that shop for repentance, and to the other shop for feeling, and to a third store for a tender heart, and then direct you to call on Christ at last for a few odds and ends. No, no, but come to Christ for everything.

"Come, ye needy, come and welcome,
God's free bounty glorify;
True belief and true repentance,
Every grace that brings you nigh,
Without money
Come to Jesus Christ and buy."

I heard of a shop some time ago in a country town where they sold everything, and the man said that he did not believe that there was anything a human being wanted but what he could rig him out from top to toe. Well, I do not know whether that promise would have been carried out to the letter if it had been tried, but I know it is so with Jesus Christ; he can supply you with all you need, for "Christ is all." There is not a need your soul can possibly have but the Lord Jesus Christ can supply it, and the very best way to come is to come to him for everything.

The best way to come to Christ is to *come meaning to get everything*, and to obtain all the plenitude of grace, which he has laid up in store, and promised freely to give. Some poor souls who come to Jesus Christ seem as if they wanted a little relief from fear, a hope that they may just get saved, and a fair chance of going to heaven when they die. Pray do not come in that way, my dear friend. Come intending to obtain the fulness of love, the uttermost of grace. Some time ago, when there was a dinner given to poor people, they were told to come and they should have all they could eat. Do you know what they did, some of them? There was not to be any dinner till six o'clock. Well, that they might have a noble appetite, they did not eat any breakfast—not they. They meant to get all they could now they had an opportunity, and so they came as hungry as possible. Many years ago, I am told, it used to be the custom of the lord of the manor, in certain villages, on Christmas-day to give the poor people a basin of food, and the rule was that whatever basin was brought his lordship always filled it. It was perfectly marvellous how the basins grew, till at last, when some of the women came with their basins the lord of the manor looked at the huge bowls and wondered how they could dare to bring such capacious vessels. But if he was a man of a generous heart, all he would say to his steward would be, "These people believe in my generosity. Go and fill their

bowls. Fill, and fill on till you have filled them all. As long as they bring their bowls none shall say that I denied them." And now, when you go to Christ, take a capacious vessel of large prayer and great expectation. Enlarge your desire, and make up your mind to this—"I am not going in to be a miserable Christian, with barely enough grace to keep me from open profanity, to whitewash me with a respectable profession, and ensure me against the peril of everlasting perdition: I mean to take a higher aim, and to seek a better portion. Fain would I vie with saints and angels and be the most happy, the most useful, the most joyous, the most holy believer that ever lived, if God will help me so to be." I wish we had some of the old Methodist fire back amongst us again. Some of those dear old people, if they did not know much, used to enjoy much, and when they went to hear a sermon they listened with a zest, for they received the word of God as a fresh inspiration; it was a lively oracle to them. The gospel as it was preached to them awoke an echo in their hearts, they were all alive to its good cheer, and they shouted, "Amen, hallelujah, bless the Lord," as they heard it, for it went home to their souls. Now a days we are very proper and decorous in our behaviour all of us, and we are not a little critical in our taste. As we pick up a crumb of the gospel we like to know whether it is the real aërated bread baked in a tin, or whether it is the common household bread of the shops. The preacher is a "little odd," and he does not cut the bread exactly into dice pieces, and so we do not like the manner of service, for we are rather fastidious, and we air our own conceits by fault-finding. Because the Lord's servant does not very daintily bring us our portion on a silver salver, and hold it out to us, we curl our lip and say, "No, thank you." Oh, may God deliver us from the fashionable stiffness and artificial nonsense. May he revive in us the reality both of nature and grace, so that we may come to his table of love with a good appetite. Modern Christians remind me of our boyish days, when we went to bathe in the sea, and used to dip our toes in the waves, instead of taking a plunge head first. I am sure that to plunge right in is the best way with religion. Throw your whole soul into it, and allow the glorious waves of everlasting love to go right over your head, and then dive and swim in that sea which is bottomless, and rejoice in the Lord with all your heart. But this mere dabbling about with *goody-goody goodliness*, instead of the grand old godliness, makes professors all of a shiver, and they stand in doubt, as though they hardly liked it, and would rather get back to the world and put on their old clothes again, only they are half afraid to do so. Oh, may the Lord give us to come with all our needs to him—to come to him for everything, and to come determined to have everything that is to be had, and to go in for it thoroughly by God's grace. That is the way to come to Christ.

III. There remains one other question—WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO COME AFTERWARDS? The answer is,—Come just as you used to come. Brethren and sisters, the text does not say that you *have come* to Christ, though that is true, but that you *are coming;* and you are to be always coming. The way to continue coming is to come just in the same way as you came at first. I have many things to say about this, but my time has gone, and therefore I will not enlarge, but I will only put them thus in brief. I am persuaded that the only happy, the only safe way for

a Christian to live is to live in daily dependence upon the mercy of God in Jesus Christ, just as he did when he was a babe in grace and a stone newly drawn from the quarry of nature. I know what it is to build up a nice structure of my own experience on the foundation of Christ, and to climb upon it, instead of standing on the foundation. If you were ever on the top of Snowdon, or some other high mountain, you will have noticed that to make the standing a little higher they put up some wooden scaffold or other, some ten or twelve feet of platform, to increase the elevation, and then everybody wants to get up on that platform. Well, now, I have built my little platform on Christ. My own experience has made a very handsome erection, I can tell you. I have felt, "Well, I know this and that and the other by experience," and I have been quite exalted. Sometimes, too, I have built a platform of good works—"I have done something for Christ after all." The proud flesh says, "Oh yes, you really have performed something you might talk about if you liked." Self-confidence has piled my platform up and it has been a very respectable looking concern, and I have asked a few friends up. But, do you know what has occurred? Why, I have felt my platform shake. It began to tremble. Stress of weather had rotted the beams, and the supports have begun to give way, and I have seen all my building tumble down, and I have gone down with it; and as I have gone down with it I have thought, "It is all over with me now. I am going crash down, I do not know how far, but perhaps I shall fall to the bottom of the mountain" Instead of that I alighted on the top of the mountain. I did not fall very far, but came right down where it had been most sensible of me if I had always kept, namely, on *terra firma*, down on the solid earth. I have noticed that a great many of my brethren have been lately building some very pretty little wooden structures on the top of Jesus Christ. I think they call them "the higher life," if I rightly recollect the name. I do not know of any life that is higher than that of simple faith in Jesus Christ. As far as I am concerned, the highest life for me out of heaven is the life of a poor publican saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner." My very good friends are not content with this position, though he who keeps it goes to his house justified more than boasters. Some friends built very high a little while ago, I thought they would soon reach the moon, but certain of them went down in a very ugly way, I have heard, and I am afraid some more will go down if they do not mind what they are at. Give up building these artificial elevations: give up resting on them; and just stand on the level of Christ's finished work, the blood of Christ for sinners shed; the righteousness of Christ to sinners imputed. Be yours the humble plea—

"I the chief of sinners am,
But Jesus died for me."

He that is down there will never fall, and he who keeps there is really as high up as the man who thinks he is all aloft; for all above living by faith in Christ is mere dream and moonshine. There is nothing higher, after all, than just being nobody, and Christ being everybody, and singing with poor Jack, the huckster,

"I'm a poor sinner, and nothing at all,
But Jesus Christ is my all in all."

If you grow till you are less than nothing, you are full grown, but few have reached that stage; and if you grow till Christ is everything to you, you are in your prime; but, alas, how far short of this do most men fall! The Lord bring you to that highest of all growths—to be daily coming to Christ; always empty in yourself, but full in him; always weak in yourself, but strong in him; always nothing in self, but Christ your perpetual all in all! The Lord keep you there, brothers and sisters, and he will have praise and glory of you, both now and for ever. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—I Peter ii. 1—16.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—795, 606; and "O Christ what burdens bowed thy head"—44 Sankey.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

YOUR PERSONAL SALVATION.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 22ND, 1880, BY

C. H. SPURGEON.

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into."—1 Peter i. 9—12.

"Let thy mercies come also unto me, O Lord, even thy salvation, according to thy word."—Psalm cxix. 41.

THESE two texts will be to me as a bow and a sword: the first for shooting the arrows of truth, and the second for close quarters in dealing with individual consciences. You will see the reason for the pair of texts as we proceed. May the Holy Spirit make use of both according to his own mind.

Last Sabbath-day I discoursed upon the God of salvation: this morning our principal object is to speak of that salvation itself. I then tried to show that God is always the same, and that the God of the Old Testament, unto whom belongeth the issues from death, is the God of our salvation still. My first text runs upon the same line, for it teaches us that the prophets of old, who spoke by the power of the Holy Spirit, testified concerning the same salvation which has been reported to us by the apostles as actually accomplished. There has been no new salvation; there has been a change in the messengers, but they have all spoken of one thing; and, though their tidings have been more clearly understood in these latter days, the substance of the good news is still the same. The Old Testament and the New are one, inspired by the same Spirit, and filled with the same subject, namely, the one promised Messiah. The prophets foretold what the apostles reported. The seers looked forward, and the evangelists look backward: their eyes meet at one place; they see eye to eye, and both behold the cross.

I shall aim this morning at commending the salvation of God to those of you who possess it, that you may be the more grateful for your

choice inheritance; and still more shall I labour to commend it to those who possess it not, that having some idea of the greatness of its value they may be stirred up to seek it for themselves. Ah, my unsaved hearers, how great is your loss in missing the salvation of God! "How shall you escape if you neglect so great salvation?" O that you might be rescued from such folly! Perhaps God the Holy Spirit will show you the preciousness of this salvation, and then you will no longer neglect, despise, or refuse it, but will offer the prayer which I have selected as a sort of second text, and entreat the Lord to let his mercies come to you, even his salvation. The prayer may be helpful in enabling you to take with you words and turn unto the Lord. God grant it may be so!

First, I shall in much simplicity, with a vehement desire for the immediate conviction and salvation of my hearers, try to COMMEND THE SALVATION OF GOD by opening up what Peter has said in the verses before us.

Let me urge you to give earnest heed to the salvation of God, because *it is a salvation of grace*. The tenth verse says, "Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of *the grace that should come unto you*." Salvation is altogether of grace, grace which comes from God in his mercy to man in his helplessness. The gospel does not come to you asking something of you, but its hands are laden with gifts more precious than gold, which it freely bestows upon guilty men. It comes to us, not as a reward for the obedient and deserving, but as a merciful boon for the disobedient and undeserving. It treats with us, not upon the ground of justice, but upon terms of pure mercy. It asks no price and exacts no purchase; it comes as a benefactor, not as a judge. In the gospel God giveth liberally and upbraideth not. We are accustomed not only to say "grace," but "free grace." It has been remarked that this is a tautology. So it is, but it is a blessed one, for it makes the meaning doubly clear and leaves no room for mistake. Since it is evidently objectionable to those who dislike the doctrine intended, it is manifestly forcible, and therefore we will keep to it. We feel no compunction in ringing such a silver bell twice over—grace, free grace. Lest any should imagine that grace can be otherwise than free, we shall continue to say, not only grace, but free grace, so long as we preach. You are lost, my dear hearer, and God proposes your salvation, but not on any ground of your deserving to be saved, else would the proposal most assuredly fall to the ground in the case of many of you: I might have said in the cases of us all, though some of you think not so. The Lord proposes to save you because you are miserable and he is merciful; because you are necessitous and he is bountiful. Why, methinks every man who hears this good news should open both his ears, and lean forward, that he may not lose a word. Yes, and he should open his heart, too; for salvation by grace is most suitable to all men, and they need it greatly. Only give intimation that goods are to be had gratis, and your shop will be besieged with customers. Those who want us to notice their wares are often crafty enough to put at the head of their advertisement what is not true, "*To be given away*": but salvation's grand advertisement is true; salvation is everything for nothing: pardon free, Christ free, heaven free. "Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." Our good

Physician has none but gratis patients. Since the boons which the God of all grace grants to sinful men are beyond all price, he does not barter and chaffer with them, but makes his blessings free as air. I am sure that if you feel yourselves to be guilty, the very idea of being saved by grace will have a charm for you. To a thirsty man the sound of a rippling stream is music, and to a convinced conscience free pardon is as rivers of water in the wilderness. Oh, that all the world would listen when we have such a message to tell.

Again, your closest attention may well be asked to the salvation of God when you are told in the text that *it is by faith.* "Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." Salvation is not obtained by penances, painful and humiliating: nor by despondency and despair; nor by any effort, mental or spiritual, involving a purchase by labour and pain; but entirely and alone by faith, or trust, in the Lord Jesus. Do you ask—is it so, that salvation is by believing, simply believing? Such is the statement of the word of God. We proclaim it upon the warrant of infallible Scripture. "All that believe are justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses." "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." "He that believeth in him is not condemned." "He that believeth on him hath everlasting life." These are a mere handful of proof texts gleaned from wide fields of the like kind. "Repent ye and believe the gospel," is our one plain and simple message. We cry again and again, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "Believe only," and "Jesus only," are our two watchwords. Now, it is singularly foolish that men should cavil at this which ought to please them. The very simplicity of faith they cavil at. What, shall it be so, that the gospel shall be regarded as too easy a thing? Will men quarrel with mercy for being too generous to them? If there be a condition, is it wisdom on our part to contend with God because that condition seems to be too slight? What would you have for a condition? Would you have it proclaimed that men must be saved by works? Which among you would then be saved? Your works are imperfect and full of evil. The law cannot justify you, it condemns you. As long as you are under the law hath not the Holy Spirit declared that you are under the curse? Ought ye not, ye sons of men, to bless God that salvation is of faith that it might be by grace, and that it might be possible to you, and sure to all the seed? The sinner cannot keep the law of God; he has already broken it most terribly, and he is himself enfeebled and depraved by the fall. Adam did not stand when he was in his perfection; what shall we do who are ruined by his fall, and full of evil? By the grace of God the sinner can believe in Jesus: this is ceasing from his own power and merit, and leaving himself in his Saviour's hands. Salvation by faith thus sets an open door before those whom the law shuts out; it is in every way adapted to the case of the guilty and fallen, and such characters should hasten to accept salvation thus presented to them. O my God, how is it that this message does not at once arouse all who hear it to an eager acceptance of thy salvation? O that the Spirit of God would make these appeals powerful with you!

The gospel of salvation ought to be regarded by you, *for it has engrossed the thoughts of prophets.* The text says, "Of which salvation

the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you." Those great men, the choice spirits of the ages which they adorned, were delighted to preach of this salvation as a blessing to be hereafter revealed. They did not themselves altogether understand what they were called to reveal, for the Holy Spirit often carried them beyond themselves and made them utter more than they understood. The inspiration of the Bible is verbal inspiration. In some cases it must have been only verbal; in every case it must have been mainly so. The human mind is not able to understand and to express all the thoughts of God, they are too sublime; and therefore God dictated to the prophets the very language which they should deliver,—language of which they themselves could not see the far-reaching meaning. They rejoiced in the testimony of the Spirit within them, but they were not free from the necessity to search, and to search diligently if they would for themselves derive benefit from the divine revelation. I know not how this is, but the fact is clearly stated in the text, and must be true. Oh, my hearers, how diligently you ought to search the Scriptures and listen to the saving word! If men that had the Holy Ghost, and were called "seers," nevertheless searched into the meaning of the word which they themselves spoke, what ought such poor things as we are to do in order to understand the gospel? It should be our delight to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest the doctrines of grace. Surely it must be a crime of crimes to be living in utter neglect of a salvation which gained the attentive mind of Daniel, and Isaiah, and Ezekiel. O that the long list of great and holy men would have some weight with thoughtless ones. I would cause a noble line of prophets to pass before you this morning that you may see how many of them spake of Christ and his salvation. From Abel, whose blood cried from the ground, down to him who spake of the Sun of righteousness as near his rising, they all spoke in Jehovah's name for your sakes. From Moses down to Malachi, all of these lived, and many of them died, that they might bear witness to "the grace which is come unto you." They themselves were, no doubt saved; but, still, the full understanding and enjoyment of the truth was reserved for us. Unto them it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us, they did minister the things of God. They lighted lamps which shine for future ages; they told of a Christ who was actually to come in the latter days, to work out his redemption after they had all died in faith without a sight of his actual coming. You and I live in the light of a finished salvation. God has appeared in human flesh; Christ has borne the guilt of man; his atonement is completed. Jesus has risen from the dead and gone into the glory, pleading for believers. Surely that which prophets thought it worth their while to study by night and by day, though they knew that they should never see it, ought to be thought worthy of the devout attention of those immediately concerned in it. If Daniel set his face by prayer and study, in fasting and in loneliness, to search out the salvation of the future, we ought at once to seek for the salvation which is now present among us. If Isaiah spake with golden tongue, as the very Chrysostom of the old dispensation; if Jeremiah wept, like a Niobe, rivers of tears; if Ezekiel, despite the splendour of his princely intellect, was almost blinded by the splendour of his visions—if the whole goodly fellowship of the prophets lived

and died to study and to foretell the great salvation, we ought to give most earnest heed to it. If they pointed us to the Lamb of God, and according to the best of their light foretold the coming of the Redeemer, then woe unto us if we trifle with heaven's message, and cast its blessings behind our backs. By all the prophets whom the Lord has sent, I beseech you, give his salvation a hearty welcome, and rejoice that you have lived to see it.

Furthermore, when prophecy had ceased, the Holy Spirit came upon another set of men of whom our text speaks. Peter says of these things, that they "are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven." *The apostles followed the prophets in testifying to this salvation*, and with the apostles there was an honourable fellowship of earnest evangelists and preachers. I will not stay to point out to you the admirable character of these men, but I would beg you to observe that, having seen Christ Jesus for themselves personally, they were not deceived. Many of them had eaten and drank with him: all the apostles had done so: they had been with him in familiar intercourse, and they were resolute in bearing witness that they had seen him after he had risen from the dead. These men spake with the accent of conviction. If they were duped, there certainly never was another instance of such persons, and so many of them, being so utterly deluded. They continued throughout all their lives to bear hardships and to endure reproaches for the sake of bearing witness to what they had seen and heard, and all the apostles but one died a martyr's death rather than allow the slightest suspicion to be cast upon the truth of their report. The text says that they reported these things when they preached the gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. I see them going everywhere preaching the word, dressed in no robes but those of poverty, having no distinctions but those of shame and suffering, no power but that of the Holy Spirit. I hear them fearlessly lifting up their voices among a warrior population, or gently testifying in peaceful homes: they evangelize the open country, they instruct the capital itself, Cæsar's household hears of them. I see them far away among the Parthians and Scythians, telling the barbarians that there is salvation, and that Jesus has accomplished it. With equal joy I see them telling cultured Greeks that God was in Christ, a man among men, and that the incarnate God died in man's stead that believing men might be delivered from the wrath of God, and from the plague of sin. These noble bearers of glad tidings continued to report this salvation till they had finished their missions and their lives, and therefore I feel that for us in these times to trifle with God's word, and give a deaf ear to the invitations of the gospel, is an insult to their honoured memories. You martyr them a second time by contemptuously neglecting what they died to hand to you. From the dead they bear witness against you, and when they rise again they will sit with their Lord to judge you.

Nor have we merely prophets and apostles looking on with wonder, but our text says, "Which things *the angels desire to look into*." We know very little of these heavenly beings: we know, however, that they are pure spirits, and that the elect angels have not fallen into sin. These beings are not concerned in the atonement of Christ so far as it is a ransom for sin, seeing they have never transgressed: they may,

however, derive some advantage from his death, but of that we cannot now speak particularly. They take such an interest in us, their fellow creatures, that they have an intense wish to know all the mysteries of our salvation. They were pictured, you know, upon the ark of the covenant, as standing upon the mercy-seat, and looking down upon it with steady gaze. Perhaps Peter was thinking of this holy imagery. They stand intently gazing into the marvel of Propitiation by blood. Can you quite see the beauty of this spectacle? If we knew that a door was opened in heaven, would not men be anxious to look in and see heaven's wonders; but the case is here reversed, for we see a window opened towards this fallen world, and heavenly beings looking down upon the earth, as if heaven, itself had no such object of attraction as Christ and his salvation. Watts sang not amiss when he gave us the verse—

> "Archangels leave their high abode
> To learn new mysteries here, and tell
> The love of our descending God,
> The glories of Immanuel."

Paul tells us that to principalities and powers in the heavenly places shall be made known by the church the manifold wisdom of God. For men to be lessons to angels, books for seraphs to read, is a strange fact. Perhaps the angelic enquirers ask such questions as this: How is God just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly? At first it must have been, I think, a wonder that he who said, "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," could have permitted man to live on and to have a hope of eternal life. How could he who saith that he will by no means clear the guilty yet bestow his favours upon guilty men? Angels wonder as they see how, through the substitution of Jesus Christ, God can be sternly just and yet abundantly gracious; but while they learn this they long to discover more of the truth wrapped up in the one great sacrifice: they peer and pry, and search and consider, and hence the doctrines of the gospel are spoken of as "things which the angels desire to look into." Now, think you if these glorious spirits who needed not to be redeemed, yet intently gaze upon the Redeemer, should not we also desire to look into the mysteries of his death? O men and women, is it nothing to you that the Son of God should give his life a ransom for many? If these spotless ones marvel at that sacred bath of blood by which sin is washed away, will not you, who are covered with defilement, stop a while to see the Lord whose flowing veins afford such purging? Methinks, if I saw an angel intently gazing upon any object, if I were a passer by, I should stop and look too. Have you never noticed in the streets that if one person stands still and looks up, or is occupied with gazing into a shop window, others become curious and look also? I would enlist that faculty of curiosity which is within every man, and prompt you to search with the angels as they pry into the underlying meaning of the fact and doctrine of atonement? They stand at the cross-foot ravished, astounded: yea, all heaven to this day has never ceased its amazement at the dying Son of God, made sin for men, and will none of you spare an hour to look this way and see your best Friend? Shall it be that time out of mind we must come into our pulpits and talk of Christ to deaf ears, and speak to

our fellow men about the grace which is brought unto them, to find that they treat it as an old wives' fable, or a story with which they have nothing to do? Ah, my careless hearer, I wish you were in the same plight as I was in once, when I was burdened with a sense of my transgressions. If you felt as I did, you would catch at that word "grace" right eagerly, and be delighted with the promise made to "faith." You would make up your mind that if prophets searched out salvation, if apostles reported it, if angels longed to know it, you yourself would find it, or perish in searching after it. Do you forget that you must have eternal life, or you are undone for ever? Do not trifle with your eternal interests! Do not be careless where earth and heaven are in earnest! Prophets, apostles, angels, all beckon you to seek the Lord. Awake, thou that sleepest. Arise, O sluggish soul! A thousand voices call thee to bestir thyself, and receive the grace which has come unto thee.

We have already gone a long way with this text, rising step by step. We have stood where angels gaze; now behold another wonder: we rise beyond them to the angels' Master. *Christ is the substance of this salvation.* For what saith the text? The prophets spake "beforehand of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow." Ah, there is the point. To save men Jesus suffered. The manhood and the Godhead of Christ endured anguish inconceivable. All through his life our Lord was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." His was the bravest heart that ever lived, and the gentlest spirit that ever breathed, but the most crushed and down-trodden. He went from one end of our heavens to the other like a cloud of sympathy, dropping showers of blessing. All the trials of his people he carried in his heart, and all their sins pressed heavily upon his soul: his daily burden of care for all his people was such as none can sympathize with to the full, even though like him they have kept the flock of God. I have sometimes had intense sympathy with Moses,—I hope I am not egotistical in comparing small things with great,—when he cried, "Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant? and wherefore have I not found favour in thy sight, that thou layest the burden of all this people upon me? Have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child, unto the land which thou swarest unto their fathers? I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me." But what was the care of the tribes in the wilderness on Moses' heart compared with the myriads upon myriads that lay upon the heart of Christ, a perpetual burden to his spirit?

The sufferings of his life must never be forgotten, but they were consummated by the agonies of his death. There was never such a death. Physically, it was equal in pain to the sufferings of any of the martyrs; but its peculiarity of excessive grief did not lie in his bodily sufferings: his soul-sufferings were the soul of his sufferings. Martyrs are sustained by the presence of their God, but Jesus cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" That cry never came up from the stakes of Smithfield, or from the agonies of the Spanish *auto-da-fe*, for God was with his witnesses: but he was not with Christ. Here was the depth of his woe. Now, I pray you, if you will manifest some sign

of thought and softness, remember that if the Son of God became a man that he might suffer to the death for men, it is hard that men should turn deaf ears to the salvation which he accomplished. I hear from his cross his sad complaint, "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold, and see if there was ever sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me." Oh, if you are born of woman, and have a heart that has any flesh about it, think well of the salvation, "the grace, which is brought unto you," by the sufferings of the Son of God.

One other step remains. It cannot be higher; it is on the same level, and I beseech you to stand upon it and think a while, you that have thought so little of yourselves and of your God. It is this. *The Holy Ghost is the witness to all this.* It was the Holy Ghost that spake in the prophets; it was the Holy Ghost who was with those who reported the gospel at the first; it is the same Holy Spirit who every day bears witness to Christ. Do you not know that we have miracles in the Christian church still? Scoffers come to us and say, "Work a miracle, and we will believe you." We do work these miracles every day. Had you been present at a meeting held here last month you would have heard something not far short of one hundred persons one after another assert that by the preaching of the gospel in this place lately their lives have been completely changed. In the case of some of these the change is very obvious to all persons acquainted with them. How was this great change achieved? By the Holy Spirit through the gospel of your salvation. But I need not quote those special cases; there are many here who would tell you, if this were the time to speak, where they used to spend their Sabbaths, and what was their delight. All things have become new with them. They now seek after holiness as earnestly as they once pursued evil: though they are not what they want to be, they are not what they used to be. They never thought of purity or goodness, or anything of the kind, but they loved the wages of unrighteousness, and now they loathe the things they once loved. I have seen moral miracles quite as marvellous in their line as the healing of a leper or the raising of the dead. This is the witness of the Holy Ghost which he continues to bear in the church, and by that witness I entreat you to stop and think of the blessed salvation which can work the same miracle in you. From the first day in which man fell, when the Holy Ghost at the gates of Eden presented the gospel in the first promise, all down the prophetic ages, and then by Christ, and by his apostles, and onward by all the men whom God has sent since then to speak with power, the Holy Ghost entreats you to consider Christ and his salvation. To this end he convinces the world of sin and of righteousness, and of judgment to come, that men may turn unto the salvation of God and live for ever. By the Spirit of the living God I entreat you, dear hearers, no longer to neglect the great salvation which has won the admiration of all holy beings, and has the seal of the triune God upon its forefront.

II. So far have I commended my Lord's salvation, and now I would desire you, with all this in your own minds, to turn to the prayer in the one hundred and nineteenth Psalm: "Let thy mercies come also unto me, O Lord, even thy salvation according to thy word." Use the prayer with this intent:—Lord, I have been hearing what prophets and apostles and angels think of thy salvation, what thy Son and what thy Spirit

think of it; now let me humbly say what I think of it: Oh that it were mine! Oh that it would come to me! This, then, is my second head. I would RECOMMEND THE PRAYER OF THE PSALMIST.

I will say about it, first, that *it is in itself a very gracious prayer*, for it is offered on right grounds. "Let *thy mercies* come also unto me." There is no mention of merit or desert. His entreaty is for mercy only. He pleads guilty, and throws himself upon the prerogative of the King, who can pardon offenders. Are you willing, my dear hearer, you who have never sought the Saviour, are you willing at this moment to stand on that ground, and to ask for salvation as the result of mercy? You shall have it on such terms, but you can never be saved until you will own that you are guilty and submit to justice. Observe the plural, "Let thy *mercies* come to me," as if David felt that he needed a double share of it, ay, a sevenfold measure of it. Elsewhere he cried, "According unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions." Our sense of sin leads us to use similar language. Lord, I need much mercy, manifold mercy, multiplied mercy, I want mercy upon mercy; I want forgiving mercy, I want regenerating mercy, I want mercy for the present as well as for the past, and I shall want mercy to keep me in the future if I am to be saved at all. Friend, set your plea on that ground. Multiplied sins crave multiplied mercies. "Let thy mercies come also unto me, O Lord."

It is a gracious prayer, because it asks for the right thing: "even *thy salvation*," not a salvation of my own invention, but "thy salvation." God's salvation is one in which his divine sovereignty is revealed, and that sovereignty must be accepted and adored. Do not dispute against God's salvation, but accept it in its entirety, just as it is revealed. Receive the salvation which the Lord planned in eternity, which he wrought out on Calvary, and which he applies to the heart by the Holy Spirit. You need salvation from sinning as well as salvation from hell, and that the Lord will give you. You want salvation from self to God, and that, too, he will bestow. Ask for all that the Lord intends by his salvation and includes in it. "Let thy mercies come also unto me, even thy salvation."

You see, dear brethren, that the prayer is put in the right form, for it is added, "Even thy salvation *according to thy word*." He wishes to be saved in the manner which the Lord has appointed. Dear hearer, where are you? Are you hidden away in the foggy corners? I wish I could get a hold of your hand, and speak as a brother to you. You do not want God to go out of the way of his word to save you: do you? You are willing to be saved in the Scriptural way, the Bible way. People nowadays will do anything but keep to the word of God, they will follow any book but the Bible. Now, do pray the Lord to give you the salvation of the Bible in the Bible's own way. Lord, if thy word says I must repent, give me thy salvation, and cause me to repent; if thy word says that I must confess my sin, give me thy salvation in the confession of sin; if thou sayest I must trust to Christ, Lord, help me now to trust him; only grant me thy salvation according to thy word.

Observe that the whole prayer is conceived and uttered in a humble spirit. It is "Let thy salvation *come* also unto me." He owns his helplessness. He cannot get at the mercy, he wants it to come to him. He

is so wounded and so sick that he cannot put on the plaister nor reach the medicine, and therefore he seeks the Lord to bring it to him. He is like the man half dead on the road to Jericho, and needs that one should pour in the oil and wine, for he cannot help himself by reason of his spiritual lethargy and death.

"Let thy mercies come to me, O Lord." This implies that there is a barrier between him and the mercy; the road appears to be blocked up; the devil intervenes, and his fears hedge up the way, and he cries to God to clear the road. "Lord, let thy mercies come. Didst thou not say, Let there be light, and there was light? So let thy mercy come to me, a poor dying sinner, and I shall have it, Lord; but it must come to me by thy power. Lo, here I lie at hell's dark door, and feel within my spirit as if the sentence of condemnation were registered in heaven against me; but let thy mercies come also unto me, O God, even thy salvation according to thy word." That is a very gracious prayer.

In the second place this prayer *may be supported by gracious arguments.* May the Spirit of God help you to plead them. I will suppose some poor heart painfully longing to use this prayer. Here are arguments for you. Pray like this. Say, "Lord, let thy mercy come to me, for I need mercy." Do not go on the tack of trying to show that you are good, because mercy will then pass you by. To argue merit is to plead against yourself. Whenever you say, "Lord, I am as good as other people; I try to do my best," and so on, you act as foolishly as if a beggar at your door should plead that he was not very badly off, not half so needy as others, and neither scantily fed nor badly clothed. This would be a new method of begging, and a very bad one. No, no; tell out your case in all its terrible truthfulness. Say, "O Lord, I feel that nobody in all this world needs thy mercy more than I do: let my need plead with thee; give me thy salvation. I am no impostor, I am a sinner: let thy mercy and thy truth visit me in very deed." Your soul's wounds are not such as sham beggars make with chemicals: they are real sores; plead them with the God of all grace. Your poverty is not that which wears rags abroad and fine linen at home; you are utterly bankrupt, and this you may urge before the Lord as a reason for his mercy.

Next plead this: "Lord, thou knowest, and thou hast made me to know somewhat of what will become of me if thy mercy does not come to me: I must perish, I must perish miserably. I have heard the gospel, and have neglected it; I have been a Sabbath breaker, even when I thought I was a Sabbath keeper; I have been a despiser of Christ, even when I stood up and sang his praises, for I sang them with a hypocrite's lips. The hottest place in hell will surely be mine unless thy mercy come to me. Oh, send that mercy, now." This is good and prevalent pleading: hold on to it.

Then plead, "If thy mercy shall come to me it will be a great wonder, Lord. I have not the confidence to do more than faintly hope it may come; but, oh, if thou dost ever blot out my sin I will tell the world of it; I will tell the angels of it: through eternity I will sing thy praises, and claim to be of all the saved ones the most remarkable instance of what thy sovereign grace can do. Do you feel like that, dear hearer? I used to think if the Lord saved *me* he would have begun on a new

line altogether, that his mercy would have sent up her song an octave higher than before. In every man's case there will be a conviction that there is a something so special about his guilt that there will be something very special about the mercy which can put that guilt away. Plead then the peril of your soul, and the glory which grace will gain by your rescue. Plead the greatness of the grace needed, for Christ delights to do great marvels, and his name is Wonderful. "Lord, pardon mine iniquity, for it is great. Lord, save me, for I am a nobody, and it will be a wonder indeed if thy grace shall visit me."

Then you can put this to the good Saviour. Tell him if he will give you his salvation, he will not be impoverished by the gift. "Lord, I am a thirsty soul; but thou art such a river that if I drink from thee there will be no fear of my exhausting thy boundless supply." They put up over certain little nasty, dirty ponds by the roadside, "No dogs may be washed here." Pity the dogs if they were! But no one puts up such a notice on the banks of great, glorious Old Father Thames. You may wash your dogs if you like, and his flood will flow on; there is too much of it to be so readily polluted. So is it with the boundless mercy of God. God permits many a poor dog of a sinner to be washed in it, and yet it is just as full and efficacious as ever. You need not be afraid of enjoying too much sunlight, for the sun loses nothing by your basking in his beams. So is it with divine mercy, it can visit you, and bless you, and remain as great and glorious as ever. Out of the fulness of Christ millions may still receive salvation, and he will remain the same overflowing fountain of grace. Plead then, "Lord, if such a poor soul as I shall be saved, I shall be made supremely happy, but none of thine attributes or glories shall be one jot the less illustrious; thou wilt be as great and blessed a God as ever." You may even say, "Lord, now that thy Son Jesus has died, it will not dishonour thee to save me. Before the atoning sacrifice it might have stained thy justice to pass by sin; but now the sacrifice is offered thou canst be just and yet the justifier. Lord, none shall say thou art unjust if thou savest even me, now that Jesus Christ has bled. Since thou thyself hast made my salvation possible without infringement of thy law, I beseech thee fulfil the design of the great sacrifice, and save even me."

There is another plea implied in the prayer, and a very sweet argument it is—"Let thy mercies come *also* unto me, O Lord." It means: "It has come to so many before, therefore let it come also unto me Lord, if I were the only one, and thou hadst never saved a sinner before, yet would I venture upon thy word and promise. Especially I would come and trust the blood of Jesus: but, Lord, I am not the first by many millions. I beseech thee, then, of thy great love, let thy salvation come unto me." You notice in the parable of the prodigal that the forlorn feeder of swine was the only son that had gone astray, and consequently the first that ever tried whether his father would receive him. The elder brother had not gone astray, and was there at home, to grumble at his younger brother; but the poor prodigal son, though he had no instance before him of his father's willingness to forgive, was bold to try by faith his father's heart. None had trodden that way before, yet he made bold to explore it. He felt that he should not be cast out. But when we hear any of you say, "I will arise, and go to my Father," scores of us

are ready to leap out of our seats and cry, "Come along, brother, for we have come, and the gracious Father has received us." I do not know whether the elder brother is here to murmur at a penitent sinner; I am happy to say I have none of his spirit. It will make my heart happy; the bells of my whole nature will ring for joy if I may only bring one of my poor, prodigal brothers back to my great Father's house. Oh, come along with you, and let this be the plea: "Thou hast received so many, O receive me." Cry, "Bless me, even me also, O my Father." The Lord has not come to the end of his mercy yet. Jesus has not come to the end of his saving work yet. There is room for you, and there will be room for thousands upon thousands yet, until the Master of the house hath risen up and shut to the door. He has not risen up, nor closed the door as yet, and still his mercy cries, "Come to me, come to me, come to me, and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

I will close by assuring you that this blessedly gracious prayer, which I have helped to back up with arguments, *will be answered by our gracious God*. Oh, be sure of this, he never sent his prophets to preach to us a salvation which cannot be ours; he never sent his apostles to report to us concerning a mere dream; he never set the angels wondering at an empty speculation; he never gave his Son to be a ransom which will not redeem; and he never committed his Spirit to witness to that which after all will mock the sinner's need. No, he is able to save: there is salvation, there is salvation to be had, to be had now, even now. We are sitting in the light in this house while a dense fog causes darkness all around, even darkness which may be felt; this is an emblem of the state of those who are in Christ: they have light in their hearts, light in their habitations, light in Jesus Christ. O come to him and find salvation now. May God bring any that have been in darkness into his marvellous light, and bring them now, and unto his name shall be praise for ever and ever. Amen and amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 Peter i.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—485, 106, 807.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

ALL THINGS ARE READY. COME.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 13TH, 1877, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Come, for all things are now ready."—Luke xiv. 17.

THIS invitation was first of all made to the Jews, but it seems to me to have a peculiar appropriateness to ourselves. It is later in the day than when first the Lord was here, and therefore the supper time is evidently closer at hand. The shadows lengthen, the sun of the present dispensation is nearing its setting; by nearly nineteen hundred years has its day been shortened since first the Lord sent forth his servants at supper time. The fulness of time for the marriage supper of the Lamb must speedily arrive, and therefore it behoves us to be more than ever earnest in delivering the message to the invited guests.

And if all things could be said to be ready even in our Saviour's day, we may say it with still greater emphasis now; for when he delivered this parable the Holy Spirit was not yet given, but Pentecost has now passed, and the Spirit of God abideth with us to accompany the word, to fill it with power and to bless our souls as we feed upon the truth. Very emphatically then at this time all things are now ready, and the supper awaits the guests. I pray you do not begin to make excuses, but be prepared to follow us when we bid you come, to go with us when we seek to bring you in, or at least to yield to our entreaties when with all the sacred violence of love we would compel you to come in. We will not grudge the use of all the three increasing modes of persuasion so long as you are but led to "Come, for all things are now ready."

There are two things clearly in the text, and these have a close relation to one another. A plain invitation—"Come," and then a forcible argument—"for all things are ready." The argument is fetched from the divine preparations, gathered from among the dainty viands of the royal feast. "My oxen and my fatlings are killed, come to the supper." The readiness of everything on God's part is the argument why men should come and partake of his grace: and that is the point upon which

we will dwell at this time—the readiness of the feast of mercy is the reason why men should come to it at once.

I. We will begin our meditation by laying down the first statement which shall make our first division of discourse, namely, that IT IS GOD'S HABIT TO HAVE ALL THINGS READY, whether for his guests or his creatures. You never discover him to be behindhand in anything. When the guests come there is not a scramble to get the table arranged and the food prepared, but the Lord has great forethought, and every little point of detail is well arranged. "All things are ready."

It was so in creation. He did not create a single blade of grass upon the face of the earth until the soil and the atmosphere had been prepared for it, and until the kindly sun had learned to look down upon the earth. Imagine vegetation without a sun, or without the alternation of day and night. But the air was full of light, the firmament upheld the clouds, and the dry land had appeared from out of the sea, and then all things were ready for herb, and plant, and tree. Nor did God prepare one single creature that hath life, nor fowl that fly in the midst of heaven, nor fish that swim the seas, nor beast that moveth on the dry land, until he had prepared its *habitat*, and made ready its appointed food. There were no cattle before there were meadows for their grazing; no birds till there were trees for their nests, no, nor even a creeping insect till its portion of meat had been provided. No creature had to wait in hungry mood while its food was growing; all things were ready: ready first for vegetation, and then afterwards for animal life. As for Adam, when God came to make him as his last and noblest work of creation, all things were ready. The garden was laid out upon the banks of flowing streams, and planted with all kinds of trees, the fruits were ripe for his diet, and the flowers in bloom for his delight. He did not come to an unfurnished house, but he entered upon a home which his Father had made pleasant and agreeable for his dwelling. The world was first fitted up, and then the man who was to govern that world was placed in it. "All things are ready," the Lord seems to say, "Spring up, O herb yielding seed"; and then "All things are ready, come forth ye roes and hinds of the field!" and then "All things are ready, stand forth, O man, made in mine own image!"

In after times we may gather illustrations of the same truth from the ways of God with men. The ark was first of all builded, and the various creatures were gathered into it, with all their necessary provender, for that strange voyage which they were about to take: and then the Lord said to Noah, "Come thou and all thy house into the ark," "All things are ready, come," was his voice to the chosen eight as they entered into the ark. There was no need to tarry any longer, every preparation was made, and therefore God shut them in. Everything is done with punctuality and exactness by the only wise God. The selfsame day that a thing is needed it is prepared.

Take another event in providence, such as the going down of Israel into Egypt. God had determined that Jacob and his seed should sojourn awhile in the land of Ham, but how wisely he prepared the whole matter. He sent a man before them, even Joseph, and Joseph was there upon the throne clothed with power to nourish them through the famine. He had been there years before, all in good time to store the wheat

while the seven years of plenty lasted, that they might be well fed during the seven years of famine. Goshen also was at the disposal of Joseph, so that the flocks and herds of Israel might dwell in that fat land. Not into Egypt shall God's Israel go till all things are ready; and when all things are ready they will come out again with a high hand and an outstretched arm.

So was it when the tribes migrated into Canaan itself. God took them not to the promised land until all things were ready. They were made to wait for the fitting time, for the Lord said "The iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full." Not till the inhabitants of the land had passed the bounds of mercy, and were condemned to die, were the Israelites brought upon the scene to be at once their executioners and successors; and when the tribes came to the river Jordan, God had prepared everything for them, for he had sent the hornet before them to drive out the people, and a pestilence also, for the spies said, "It is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof." The Lord God had gone before them to fight their battles before they came, and to prepare a place for them, so that when they entered they dwelt in houses which they had not built, and they gathered the fruit of olives which they had not planted. They came to a land that flowed with milk and honey, a land in a fine cultivated condition, and not a wilderness which with hard labour must be reclaimed. Israel came to a country which was as the garden of the Lord, whose fruit might at once be enjoyed, for they ate of the old corn of the land almost as soon as they passed the Jordan. So you see "All things are ready" is a proclamation which the Lord has often in spirit made to those whom he chooses to bless.

Now the fact that in the great gospel supper all things are ready teaches us first, that *God's thoughts go before men's comings.* "Come, *for* all things are ready." Not "If you come, all things will be ready," but "they are ready, and therefore come." Grace is first, and man at his best follows its footsteps. Long before we ever thought of God he thought of us; yea, before we had a being and ere time itself began, in the bosom of the Eternal there were thoughts of love towards those for whom the table of his mercy is now spread. He had planned and arranged everything in his august mind from of old, he had indeed foreknown and predestinated all the provisions and all the guests of his supper; all things were settled in his eternal covenant and purpose or ever the earth was. Never think, oh sinner, that thou canst outstrip the love of God, it is at the end of the race before thou art at the beginning. God hath completed before thou hast begun. His thoughts are before ours, and *so are his acts,* for he doth not say, "All things are planned and arranged," but "All things are ready." Jesus, the great sacrifice, is slain, the fountain for our cleansing is filled with blood: the Holy Spirit has been given, the word by which we are to be instructed is in our hands, and the light which will illuminate that sacred page is promised us through the Holy Ghost. Things promised ought to encourage us to come to Christ, but things already given ought to be irresistible attractions. All things are already completed by the sacred Trinity before we come to cry for mercy; this should make us very hopeful and eager in our approaches to the Lord. Come, sinner,

come at once: this ought to encourage thee, since all that God has to do in thy salvation is done before thou hast a thought of him or turnest one foot towards his abode. All things are ready. Come!

This also proves how welcome those are who come. If you are invited to see a friend, and when you reach the place you find the door fast, and after knocking many times no one answers, for there is no one at home, you reckon that there is some mistake, or that the invitation was not a sincere one. Even if your host should come to the door and admit you, but should evidently be embarrassed, for there is no meal provided, and he has made no arrangements for your rest at night, you soon detect it, and like a wise man you quickly move off somewhere else, for if you had been welcome, things would have been prepared for you. But oh, poor soul, if thou comest to God all things are ready for thine entertainment.

> "Spread for thee the festal board,
> With his richest dainties stored."

The couch of rest and quietness is prepared for thee. All things are ready. How freely doth Jehovah welcome thee, how genuine is the invitation, how sincere the desire that thou shouldst come to feast with him.

So much upon our first remark, it is the habit of the Lord to have all things ready for his guests.

II. Our second statement is that THIS READINESS SHOULD BE AN ARGUMENT THAT HIS SAINTS SHOULD COME continually to him and find grace to help in every time of need. O children of God, I will lift the parable away from the immediate use which the Saviour made of it to employ it for your good. You know, beloved, that whenever the Lord Jesus Christ invites his people to come to him, and to taste of his bounty, all things are ready. It was a beautiful scene by the sea of Tiberias when the Lord spake to those who had been toiling on the lake at fishing, and said to them, "Come and dine." They were willing enough to dine, but they were busy dragging to the shore those great fishes. Remember, when they did land, they found the invitation to be no vain one, for it is written, "They saw a fire of coals there and fish laid thereon, and bread." How the coals came there, and the fish, and the bread, the evangelist does not tell us, but our Lord would not have asked them to dinner if he had not been able to give them a warm reception; there was the fire of coals, and the fish laid thereon and bread. Whenever therefore your Lord and Master, by his blessed Spirit, calls you to come near to him, you may be quite sure that all things are ready for your immediate enjoyment: you need never pause or hesitate, but approach him without delay. I want to caution you against replying, "But, Lord, I do not feel ready." That is most true, but that is not an argument which thou shouldst use to excuse thyself in holding back. It is *his* readiness that is the main thing, not thine, and as all things are ready, do thou come whether thou feelest ready or not. I have heard of some Christians who have said, "I do not feel in a proper frame of mind to pray." My brother, pray till you do. Some have said, "I do not think I shall go up to the house of God to-day, I feel so unhappy, so cast down." When shouldst

thou go so much as then, in order that thou mayest find comfort? "Still," saith one, "you would not have me sing a hymn when of heavy heart?" Ay, would I not, I would indeed, I would have thee sing thyself up from the depths of the sea where all God's billows have gone over thee. David full often did so, when he began a psalm, in the deeps, and then gradually rose, and rose, and rose, till he was in a perfect rapture of delight before the psalm was over. All things are ready with your Lord, therefore do you come whether you happen to be ready or not.

Note the times when this truth ought to have power with you. All things are ready, therefore come to *the storehouse of divine promise.* Are you in spiritual poverty? Come and take what God has provided for you, for all things are yours, and all the blessings of the everlasting hills belong to all the people of God. Are you needing strength? There is a promise, "As thy days so shall thy strength be." It is ready, come and take it. Art thou wanting consolation? Dost thou not know that all things are ready for thy comfort, that two immutable things, wherein it is impossible for God to lie, are already set before thee? Come thou, and take thy solace. Ay, remember that all that God has promised belongs to all those who believe the promise, and that you may therefore come at all times, however deep your need, and if you have but faith you shall find the special supply for the special want. All things are ready, therefore come with holy confidence, and take what is ripe enough to gather, ripe for you.

Come next to *the mercy seat* in prayer, all things are ready there. The mercy seat is sprinkled with the precious blood of Christ. The veil also is rent in twain, and from between the cherubim Jehovah's glory now shines forth with mildest radiance. Let us therefore come with boldness unto the throne of the heavenly grace, because everything there is ready for the pleading suppliant. Thou hast no need to bring anything with thee there. Thou hast no need of making preparations other than the Holy Spirit waits to give thee in the form of groanings which cannot be uttered. Come, child of God, notwithstanding thy carelessness and indifference, or whatever it may be thou hast to complain of, for though thou be unready, the throne of grace is ready, and therefore do thou draw near to it and find the grace thou needest.

If at this time we feel strong promptings towards *communion* with Christ what a blessing it is that Christ is always ready to commune with his people. "Behold," saith he, "I stand at the door and knock." We think that *we* stand at the door and knock, but it is scarcely so, the greater truth with regard to his people is that Jesus asks for fellowship with us, and tells us that if we open the door, and that is all he bids his people do, he will enter in and sup with them. and they with him. Suppose there is no supper, he will provide it—he hath all things ready. The Master saith, "Where is the guest-chamber?" He doth not say "Where is the feast?" If thy heart will be the guest-chamber, he will provide the supper, and thou shalt sup with him and he with thee. At whose door did Christ knock according to the Scriptures? It was at the door of the Laodicean church, at the door of the very church concerning which he had said, "Because thou art neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." Therefore thou poor Laodicean believer that art here this morning, if thou hast

any promptings towards Christ, arise, for all things are ready, and or ever thou art aware thy soul shall be as the chariots of Amminadib. He is ready to receive us to his heart of hearts. How sweetly this ought to constrain us to fly into the arms of Jesus.

I think the same thought ought to cross our minds with regard to *every daily duty*. We wake up in the morning, but we do not know exactly what lies before us, for God's providence has constantly new revelations: but I like to think in the morning that all things are ready for my pathway through the day, that if I will go out to serve God in my ministry he has prepared some ear into which I am to drop a gracious word, and some heart in the furrows of which I shall sow some blessed seed effectually. Behold all providence with its mighty wheels is co-working with the servant of the living God; only go forward in zeal and confidence, my brother, and thou shalt find that every step of thy way is ready for thee. Thy Master has trodden the road and marked out for thee the houses of refreshment where thou art to tarry till thou shalt come to the celestial city itself, and the hallowed spots where thou shalt bring glory to his blessed name. For a useful life all things are ready for us.

Yes, and if beyond the daily service of life we should feel a prompting to aspire to *a higher degree of holiness*, if we want to grow in grace and reach the fulness of the stature of a man in Christ Jesus, all things are ready for us. No Christian can have a sacred ambition after holiness which the Lord is not prepared to fulfil. Thou that willest to be like thy Master, thou that desirest to make a self-sacrifice that will show the power of his grace in thee, the Holy Spirit waits to help thee, all things shall work for thee, for all things are ready. Come therefore without fear.

One of these days it may be that you and I shall either be grown very old, or else disease will lay hold upon us, and we shall lie upon the sick bed watching and waiting for our Master's coming. Then there shall suddenly appear a messenger from him, who will bring us this word, "All things are ready, come unto the supper," and closing our eyes on earth we shall open them in heaven and see what he has done who so sweetly said, "I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go to prepare a place for you I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also." Oh, it will be a joyous moment when we shall hear the summons, "All things are ready, quit thy house of clay, thy farm, thy merchandise, and even her who lies in thy bosom, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and thou must be there; therefore, rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. The winter is over and past, the time of the singing of birds is come for thee, all things are ready, come!" I feel tempted to linger here, but I must tear myself away from that point to pass on to the next.

III. THE PERFECT READINESS OF THE FEAST OF DIVINE MERCY IS EVIDENTLY INTENDED TO BE A STRONG ARGUMENT WITH SINNERS WHY THEY SHOULD COME AT ONCE. To the sinner, then, do I address myself.

Soul, dost thou desire eternal life? Is there within thy spirit a hungering and a thirsting after such things as may satisfy thy spirit and make thee live for ever? Then hearken while the Master's servant gives

thee the invitation. "Come, for *all things* are ready,"—all, not some, but all. There is nothing that thou canst need between here and heaven but what is provided in Jesus Christ, in his person and in his work. All things are ready, life for thy death, forgiveness for thy sin, cleansing for thy filth, clothing for thy nakedness, joy for thy sorrow, strength for thy weakness, yea, more than all that ever thou canst want is stored up in the boundless nature and work of Christ. Thou must not say, "I cannot come because I have not this, or have not that." Art thou to prepare the feast? Art thou to provide anything? Art thou the purveyor of even so much as the salt or the water? Thou knowest not thy true condition, or thou wouldst not dream of such a thing. The great Householder himself has provided the whole of the feast, thou hast nothing to do with the provision but to partake of it. If thou lackest come and take what thou lackest; the greater thy need the greater reason why thou shouldst come where all things that thy need can possibly want will be at once supplied. If thou be so needy that thou hast nothing good at all about thee, all things are ready. What wouldst thou provide more when God has provided all things? Superfluity of naughtiness would it be if thou wert to think of adding to his "all things"; it would be but a presumptuous competing with the provisions of the great King, and this he will not endure. All that thou wantest—I can but repeat the words—between the gates of hell, where thou now liest, and the gates of heaven, to which grace will bring thee if thou believest,—all is provided and prepared in Jesus Christ the Saviour.

And all things are *ready*, dwell on that word. The oxen and the fatlings were killed; what is more, they were prepared to be eaten, they were ready to be feasted on, they smoked on the board. It is something when the king gives orders for the slaughter of so many bullocks for the feast, but the feast is not ready then; and when beneath the poleaxe the victims fall, and they are stripped and hung up ready for the fire, there is something done, but they are not ready. It is when the joints are served hot and steaming upon the table, and all that is wanted is brought forth and laid in proper order for the banquet, it is then that all things are ready, and this is the case now; at this very moment thou wilt find the feast to be in the best possible condition; it was never better and never can be better than it is now. All things are ready, just in the exact condition that thou needest them to be, just in such condition as shall be best for thy soul's comfort and enjoyment. All things are ready; nothing needs to be further mellowed or sweetened, everything is at the best that eternal love can make it.

But notice the word, "now," "All things are *now* ready"—just now, at this moment. At feasts, you know, the good housewife is often troubled if the guests come late. She would be sorry if they came half-an-hour too soon, but half-an-hour too late spoils everything, and in what a state of fret and worry she is if when all things are *now* ready, her friends still delay. Leave food at the fire awhile, and it does not seem to be "now ready," but something more than ready, and even spoiled. So doth the great householder lay stress upon this, all things are *now* ready, therefore come at once. He saith not that if thou wilt tarry for another seven years all things will then be ready; God grant that long before

that space of time thou mayest have got beyond the needs of persuasion by having become a taster of the feast, but he doth say that they are all ready now, just now. Just now that your heart is so heavy and your mind is so careless, that your spirit is so wandering—all things are ready now. Just now, though you have never thought of these things before, but dropped in this morning to see this large assembly with no motive whatever as to your own salvation, yet all things are ready *now*. Though your sins are as the stars of heaven, and your soul trembles under an awful foreboding of coming judgment, yet "all things are now ready." After all your rejections of Christ, after the many invitations that have been thrown away upon you, come ye to the supper.

And if they are ready *now*, the argument is come *now*, while still all things are ready. While the Spirit lingers and still doth strive with men, while mercy's gates still stand wide open, that "whosoever will may come," while life and health and reason still are spared to you and the ministering voice that bids thee come can still be heard, come now, come at once—all things are ready—come! Delay is as unreasonable as it is wicked now that all things are ready.

Notice that all things were ready for those who were bidden. They did not come, but they were not mocked when they were bidden to come. The fact of all things being ready proved that the invitation was a sincere one, although it was a rejected one. There are some who will not have us give an invitation to any but to those whom we believe are sure to come, nay, in a measure have come; that is to say, they make a minister to be a mere superfluity. Why need he come and invite those who have already begun to come? But we believe it to be our duty and our privilege to invite the whole mass of mankind; and even those who will not come: if we knew they would not come we should not therefore exempt them from the bidding, for the servant was sent to bid them to the wedding who nevertheless all with one consent began to make excuse. They were invited, and earnestly invited, and all things were ready, though they came not. O my dear hearers, if you do not come to Christ you will perish, but you will never be able to say you were not bidden, and that there was nothing ready for you. No, there stands the feast all spread, and you are sincerely and honestly bidden to come. God grant that you may come, and come at once.

IV. Now I am going to pass on to my fourth and last point, which may God bless to the comfort of some seeking soul. THIS TEXT DISPOSES OF A GREAT DEAL OF TALK ABOUT THE SINNER'S READINESS OR UNREADINESS: because, if the reason why a sinner is to come is because all things are ready, then it is idle for him to say "But I am not ready." It is clear that all the readiness required on man's part is a willingness to come and receive the blessing which God had provided. There is nothing else necessary; if men are willing to come, they may come, they will come. Where the Lord has been pleased to touch the will so that man has a desire towards Christ, where the heart really hungers and thirsts after righteousness, that is all the readiness which is wanted. All the fitness he requireth is that first you feel your need of him (and that he gives you), and that secondly in feeling

your need of him you are willing to come to him. Willingness to come is everything. A readiness to believe in Jesus, a willingness to cast the soul on him, a preparedness to accept him just as he is, because you feel that he is just the Saviour that you need—that is all: there was no other readiness, there could have been none, in the case of those who were poor and blind, and halt, and maimed, yet came to the feast. The text does not say, "You are ready, therefore come," that is a legal way of putting the gospel; but it says, "All things are ready, the gospel is ready, therefore you are to come." As for *your* readiness, all the readiness that is possibly wanted is a readiness which the Spirit gives us, namely, willingness to come to Jesus.

Now notice that the unreadiness of those who were bidden arose out of their possessions and out of their abilities. One would not come because he had bought a piece of land. What a great heap Satan casts up between the soul and the Saviour! What with worldly possessions and good deeds he builds an earthwork of huge dimensions between the sinner and his Lord. Some gentlemen have too many acres ever to come to Christ: they think too much of the world to think much of him. Many have too many fields of good works in which there are growing crops in which they pride themselves, and these cause them to feel that they are persons of great importance. Many a man cannot come to Christ for all things because he has so much already. Others of them could not come because they had so much to do, and could do it well—one had bought five yoke of oxen, he was going to prove them; a strong man quite able for ploughing; the reason why he did not come was because he had so much ability. Thousands are kept away from grace by what they have and by what they can do. Emptiness is more preparatory to a feast than fulness. How often does it happen that poverty and inability even help to lead the soul to Christ. When a man thinketh himself to be rich he will not come to the Saviour. When a man dreameth that he is able at any time to repent and believe, and to do everything for himself that is wanted, he is not likely to come and by a simple faith repose in Christ. It is not what you have not but what you have that keeps many of you from Christ. Sinful self is a devil, but righteous self is seven devils. The man who feels himself guilty may for awhile be kept away by his guilt, but the man who is self-righteous will never come: until the Lord has taken his pride away from him he will still refuse the feast of free grace. The possession of abilities and honours and riches keep men from coming to the Redeemer.

But on the other hand personal condition does not constitute an unfitness for coming to Christ, for the sad condition of those who became guests did not debar them from the supper. Some were *poor*, and doubtless wretched and ragged; they had not a penny to bless themselves with, as we say; their garments were tattered, perhaps worse, they were filthy, they were not fit to be near respectable people, they would certainly be no credit to my lord's table; but those who went to bring them in did not search their pockets, nor look at their coats, but they fetched them in. They were poor, but the messengers were told to bring in the poor, and therefore brought them. Their poverty did not prevent their being ready; and oh, poor soul, if thou be poor literally, or

poor spiritually, neither sort of poverty can constitute an unfitness for divine mercy.

"The poorer the wretch the welcomer here."

If thou art brought to thy last penny, yea, if that is spent, and if thou hast pawned all, and thou art left in debt over head and ears, and thinkest that there is nothing for thee but to be laid by the heels in prison for ever, nevertheless thou mayest come, poverty and all.

Another class of them were *maimed*, and so were not very comely in appearance: an arm had been lopped off, or an eye had been gouged out. One had lost a nose, and another a leg. They were in all stages and shapes of dismemberment. Sometimes we turn our heads away, and feel that we would rather give anything than look upon beggars who show their wounds, and describe how they were maimed. But it did not matter how badly they were disfigured; they were brought in, and not one of them was repulsed because of the ugly cuts he had received. So, poor soul, however Satan may have torn and lopped thee, and into whatsoever condition he may have brought thee, so that thou feelest ashamed to live, nevertheless this is no unfitness for coming; just as thou art thou mayest come to his table of grace. Moral disfigurements are soon rectified when Jesus takes the character in hand. Come thou to him, however sadly thou art injured by sin.

There were others who were *halt*, that is to say, they had lost a leg, or it was of no use to them, and they could not come except they had a crutch and crawled or hopped upon it; but nevertheless that was no reason why they were not welcome. Ah, if you find it difficult to believe, it is no reason why you should not come and receive the grand absolution which Jesus Christ is ready to bestow upon you. Lame with doubting and distrusting, nevertheless come to the supper and say, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

Others were *blind* people, and when they were told to come they could not see the way, but in that case the messenger was not told to tell them to come, he was commanded to bring them, and a blind man can come if he is brought. All that was wanted was willingness to be led by the hand in the right direction. Now you that cannot fully understand the gospel as you desire to do, that are puzzled and muddled, give your hand into the hand of Jesus, and be willing to be led, be willing to believe what you cannot comprehend, and to grasp in confidence that which you are not able yet to measure with your understanding. The blind, however ignorant or uninstructed they are, shall not be kept away because of that.

Then there were the men in the *highways*, I suppose they were beggars; and the men in the *hedges*, I suppose they were hiding, and were probably thieves; but nevertheless they were told to come, and though

they were highwaymen and hedge-birds even that did not prevent their coming and finding welcome. Though outcasts, offcasts, spiritual gipsies, people that nobody cared for, yet, whatever they might be, that was not the question, they were to come because all things were ready: come in rags, come in filth, come maimed, come covered with sores, come in all sorts of filthiness and abomination, yet because all things are ready they were to be brought or to be compelled to come in.

Now, lastly, I think it was the very thing, which in any one of these people looked like unfitness, which was a help to them. It is a great truth that what we regard as unfitness is often our truest fitness. I want you to notice these poor, blind, and halt people. Some of those who were invited would not come because they had bought some land or five yoke of oxen, but when the messenger went up to the poor man in rags and said, "Come to the supper," it is quite clear he would not say he had bought a field, or oxen, for he could not do it, he had not a penny to do the thing with, so that he was clean delivered from that temptation. And when a man is invited to come to Christ and he says, "I do not want him, I have a righteousness of my own," he will stay away; but when the Lord Jesus came along to me I never was tempted in that way, because I had no righteousness of my own, and could not have made one if I had tried. I know some here who could not patch up a garment of righteousness if they were to put all their rags together, and this is a great help to their receiving the Lord Jesus. What a blessedness it is to have such a sense of soul poverty that you will never stay away from Christ because of what you possess.

Then, next, some could not come because they had married a wife. Now, I think it is very likely that these people who were maimed and cut about were so injured that they had no wife, and perhaps could not get anybody to have them. Well then, they had not that temptation, to stay away. They were too maimed to attract the eye of anybody who was looking for beauty, and therefore they were not tempted that way. But they found at the ever-blessed supper of the Lamb an everlasting wedlock, which was infinitely better. Thus do souls lose earthly joys and comforts, and by the loss they gain supremely: they are thus made willing to close in with Christ and find a higher comfort and a higher joy. That maiming which looked like unfitness turned out to be fitness.

One excuse made was, "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them." The halt could not do that. When the messenger touched the lame man on the shoulder and said "Come," he could not say, "I am going out to-night to plough with my new team." He had never been over the clods ever since he had lost his leg, poor soul, so that he could not make such an excuse. The blind man could not say, "I have bought a piece of land and I must go to see it;" he was free

from all the lusts of the eye, and so far was all the more ready to be led to the supper. When a soul feels its own sinfulness, and wretchedness, and lost estate, it thinks itself unfit to come to Christ, but this is an assistance to it, since it prevents its looking to anything else but Christ, kills its excuses, and makes it free to accept salvation by grace.

But how about the men that were in the highway? Well, it seems to me that they were already on the road, and at least out of their houses, if they had any. If they were out there begging, they were the more ready to accept an invitation to a meal of victuals, for it was that they were singing for. A man who is out of the house of his own self-righteousness, though he be a great sinner, is in a more favourable position and more likely to come to Christ than he who prides himself in his supposed self-righteousness.

As for those who were under the hedges, well, they had no house of their own, and so they were all the more likely to come and fill God's house. Men do not take to hedges to sleep under them as long as they have even a hovel where they may rest their head, but oh, poor soul, when thou art driven to such distress that thou wouldst fain hide under any hedge, when thou hast nothing left thee but a fearful looking for of judgment, when thou thinkest thyself to be an outlaw and an outcast before God, left to wander like Cain, a waif and stray, lost to all good, thou art the very man to come to Christ. Come out of your hedges, then. I am looking for you. Though you hide yourselves away yet God's own Spirit will discover you, and bring you, I trust this very morning, to feed on love divine. Trust Jesus Christ, that is all, just as you are, with all your unfitness and unreadiness. Take what God has made ready for you, the precious blood to cleanse you, a robe of righteousness to cover you, eternal joy to be your portion. Receive the grace of God in Christ Jesus, oh receive it now. God grant you may, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke xiv. 12—35.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—909, 504, 488 (v. 3—8).

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

JESUS ONLY.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 3RD, 1870, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

'And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only."—Matthew xvii. 8.

THE last words will suffice us for a text, "Jesus only." When Peter saw our Lord with Moses and Elias, he exclaimed, "Master, it is good to be here," as if he implied that it was better to be with Jesus, and Moses, and Elias, than to be with Jesus only. Now it was certainly good that for once in his life he should see Christ transfigured with the representatives of the law and the prophets; it might be for that particular occasion the best sight that he could see, but as an ordinary thing an ecstacy so sublime would not have been good for the disciples; and Peter himself very soon found this out, for when the luminous cloud overshadowed him, and the voice was heard out of heaven, we find that he with the rest became sore afraid. The best thing after all for Peter was not the excessive strain of the transfiguration, nor the delectable company of the two great spirits who appeared with Jesus, but the equally glorious, but less exciting, society of "Jesus only." Depend on it, brethren, that ravishing and exciting experiences and transporting enjoyments, though they may be useful as occasional refreshments, would not be so good for every day as that quiet but delightful ordinary fellowship with "Jesus only," which ought to be the distinguishing mark of all Christian life. As the disciples ascended the mountain side with Jesus only, and as they went back again to the multitude with Jesus only, they were in as good company as when they were on the mountain summit, Moses and Elias being there also; and although Jesus Christ in his common habiliments and in his ordinary attire might not so dazzle their eyes as when they saw his raiment bright as the light, and his face shining as the sun, yet he really was quite as glorious, and his company quite as beneficial. When they saw him in his everyday attire, his presence was quite as useful to them as when he robed himself in splendour. "Jesus only," is after all upon the whole a better thing than Jesus, Moses, and Elias. "Jesus only," as the common Jesus, the Christ of every day, the man walking among men, communing in secret with his disciples, is a better thing for a continuance while we are in this body than the sight even of Jesus himself in the excellence of his majesty.

This morning, in trying to dwell upon the simple sight of "Jesus only," we shall hold it up as beyond measure important and delightful, and shall bear our witness that as it was said of Goliath's sword, "there is none like it," so may it be said of fellowship with "Jesus only." We shall first notice *what might have happened to the disciples after the transfiguration;* we shall then dwell on *what did happen;* and then, thirdly, we shall speak on *what we anxiously desire may happen to those who hear us this day.*

I. First, then, WHAT MIGHT HAVE HAPPENED to the three disciples after they had seen the transfiguration.

There were four things either of which might have occurred. As a first supposition, *they might have seen nobody* with them on the holy mount; they might have found all gone but themselves. When the cloud had overshadowed them, and they were sore afraid, they might have lifted up their eyes and found the entire vision melted into thin air; no Moses, no Elias, and no Jesus. In such a case they would have been in a sorry plight, like those who having begun to taste of a banquet, suddenly find all the viands swept away; like thirsty men who have tasted the cooling crystal drops, and then seen the fountain dried up before their eyes. They would not have gone down the mountain side that day asking questions and receiving instruction, for they would have had no teacher left them. They would have descended to face a multitude and to contend with a demon; not to conquer Satan, but to stand defeated by him before the crowd; for they would have had no champion to espouse their cause and drive out the evil spirit. They would have gone down among Scribes and Pharisees to be baffled with their knotty questions, and to be defeated by their sophistries, for they would have had no wise man, who spake as never man spake, to untie the knots and disentangle the snarls of controversy. They would have been like sheep without a shepherd, like orphan children left alone in the world. They would henceforth have reckoned it an unhappy day on which they saw the transfiguration; because having seen it, having been led to high thoughts by it, and excited to great expectations, all had disappeared like the foam upon the waters, and left no solid residuum behind. Alas! for those who have seen the image of the spirits of just men made perfect, and beheld the great Lord of all such spirits, and then have found themselves alone and all the high companionship for ever gone.

My dear brethren and sisters, there are some in this world, and we ourselves have been among them, to whom something like this has actually occurred. You have been under a sermon, or at a gospel ordinance, or in reading the word of God for awhile delighted, exhilarated, lifted up to the sublimer regions, and then afterwards when it has all been over, there has been nothing left of joy or benefit, nothing left of all that was preached and for the moment enjoyed, nothing, at any rate, that you could take with you into the conflicts of every-day life. The whole has been a splendid vision and nothing more. There has been neither Moses, nor Elias, nor Jesus left. You did remember what you saw, but only with regret, because nothing remained with you. And, indeed, this which happens sometimes to us, is a general habit of that portion of this ungodly world which hears the gospel

and perceives not its reality; it listens with respect to gospel histories as to legends of ancient times; it hears with reverence the stories of the days of miracles; it venerates the far-off ages and their heroic deeds, but it does not believe that anything is left of all the vision, anything for to-day, for common life, and for common men. Moses it knows, and Elias it knows, and Christ it knows, as shadows that have passed across the scene and have disappeared, but it knows nothing of any one of these as abiding in permanent influence over the mind and spirit of the present. All come and all gone, all to be reverenced, all to be respected, but nothing more; there is nothing left so far as they are concerned to influence or bless the present hour. Jesus and his gospel have come and gone, and we may very properly recollect the fact, but according to certain sages there is nothing in the New Testament to affect this advanced age, this enlightened nineteenth century; we have got beyond all that. Ah! brethren, let those who can be content to do so, put up with this worship of moral relics and spiritual phantoms; to us it would be wretchedness itself. We, on the other hand say, blessing the name of the Lord that we can say it, that there abides with us our Lord Jesus. At this day he is with us, and will be with us even to the end of the world. Christ's existence is not a fact confined to antiquity or to remote distance. By his Spirit he is actually in his church; we have seen him, though not with eyes; we have heard him, though not with ears; we have grasped him, though not with hands; and we feed upon his flesh, which is meat indeed, and his blood, which is drink indeed. We have with us at this very day Jesus our friend, to whom we make known our secrets, and who beareth all our sorrows. We have Jesus our interpreting instructor, who still reveals his secrets to us, and leads us into the mind and name of God. We have Jesus still with us to supply us with strength, and in his power we still are mighty. We confess his reigning sovereignty in the church, and we receive his all-sufficient succours. The church is not decapitated, her Head abides in vital union with her; Jesus is no myth to us, whatever he may be to others; he is no departed shade, he is no heroic personification: in very deed there is a Christ, and though others see him not, and even we with these eyes see him not, yet in him believing we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Oh, I trust it will never be so with us, that as we go about our life work our religion shall melt into fiction and become nothing but mere sentiment, nothing but thought, and dream, and vision; but may our religion be a matter of fact, a walking with the living and abiding Saviour. Though Moses may be gone, and Elias may be gone, yet Jesus Christ abideth with us and in us, and we in him, and so shall it be evermore.

Now, there was a second thing that might have happened to the disciples. When they lifted up their eyes *they might have seen Moses only.* It would certainly have been a very sad exchange for what they did see, to have seen Moses only. The face of Moses would have shone, his person would have awed them, and it would have been no mean thing for men of humble origin like themselves to walk down the mountain with that mighty king in Jeshurun, who had spoken with God face to face, and rested with him in solemn conclave by the space of forty days at a time. But yet who would exchange the sun for the

moon? Who would exchange the cold moonbeams of Moses and the law for the sunny rays of the Saviour's divine affection? It would have been an unhappy exchange for them to have lost their Master whose name is love, and to have found a leader in the man whose name is synonymous with law. Moses, the man of God cannot be compared with Jesus, the Son of God. Yet, dear brethren, there are some who see Moses only. After all the gospel preaching that there has been in the world, and the declaration of the precious doctrines of grace every Sabbath day, after the clear revelations of Scripture, and the work of the Holy Spirit in men's hearts, yet we have among us some who persist in seeing nothing but Moses only. I mean this, there are some who will see nothing but shadows still, mere shadows still. As I read my Bible I see there that the age of the symbolical, the typical, the pictorial, has passed away. I am glad of the symbols, and types, and pictures, for they remain instructive to me; but the age in which they were in the foreground has given way to a clearer light, and they are gone for ever. There are, however, certain persons who profess to read the Bible and to see very differently, and they set up a new system of types and shadows—a system, let me say, ridiculous to men of sense, and obnoxious to men of spiritual taste. There are some who delight in outward ordinances; they must have rubric and ritual, vestments and ceremonial, and this superabundantly, morning, noon and night. They regard days, and seasons, and forms of words and postures. They consider one place holy above another. They regard a certain caste of men as being priestly above other believers, and their love of symbols is seen in season and out of season. One would think, from their teachings, that the one thing needful was not "Jesus only," but custom, antiquity, outward performance, and correct observance! Alas! for those who talk of Jesus, but virtually see Moses, and Moses only. Ah! unhappy change for the heart if it could exchange spiritual fellowship with Jesus for outward acts and symbolical representations. It would be an unhappy thing for the Christian church if she could ever be duped out of the priceless boons which faith wins from her living Lord in his fulness of grace and truth, to return to the beggarly elements of carnal ordinances. Unhappy day, indeed, if Popish counterfeits of legal shadows should supplant gospel fact and substance. Blessed be God, we have not so learned Christ. We see something better than Moses only.

There are too many who see Moses only, inasmuch as they see nothing but law, nothing but duty and precept in the Bible. I know that some here, though we have tried to preach Christ crucified as their only hope, yet whenever they read the Bible, or hear the gospel, feel nothing except a sense of their own sinfulness, and arising out of that sense of sinfulness, a desire to work out a righteousness of their own. They are continually measuring themselves by the law of God, they feel their shortcomings, they mourn over their transgressions, but they go no further. I am glad that they see Moses, may the stern voice of the lawgiver drive them to the lawfulfiller; but I grieve that they tarry so long in legal servitude, which can only bring them sorrow and dismay. The sight of Sinai, what is it but despair? God revealed in flaming fire, and proclaiming with

thunder his fiery law, what is there here to save the soul? To see the Lord who will by no means spare the guilty, but will surely visit transgression with eternal vengeance, is a sight which never should eclipse Calvary, where love makes recompense to justice. O that you may get beyond the mount that might be touched, and come to Calvary where God in vengeance is clearly seen, but where God in mercy fills the throne. Oh, how blessed is it to escape from the voice of command and threatening and come to the blood of sprinkling, where "Jesus only" speaketh better things!

Moses only, however, has become a sight very common with some of you who write bitter things against yourselves. You never read the Scriptures or hear the gospel without feeling condemned. You know your duty, and confess how short you have fallen of it, and therefore you abide under conscious condemnation, and will not come to him who is the propitiation for your sins. Alas, that there should be so many who with strange perversity of unbelief twist every promise into a threatening, and out of every gracious word that drips with honey manage to extract gall and wormwood. They see the dark shadow of Moses only; the broken tablets of the law, the smoking mount, and the terrible trumpet are ever with them, and over all an angry God. They had a better vision once, they have it sometimes now; for now and then under the preaching of the gospel they have glimpses of hope and mercy, but they relapse into darkness, they fall again into despair, because they have chosen to see Moses only. I pray that a change may come over the spirit of their dream, and that yet like the apostles they may see "Jesus only."

But, my brethren, there was a third alternative that might have happened to the disciples, *they might have seen Elijah only.* Instead of the gentle Saviour, they might have been standing at the side of the rough-clad and the stern-spirited Elias. Instead of the Lamb of God, there might have remained to them only the lion who roared like the voice of God's own majesty in the midst of sinful Israel. In such a case, with such a leader, they would have gone down from the mount, and I wot that if John had said, "Command fire from heaven," Elias would have consumed his foes, the Pharisees like the priests of Baal would have found a speedy end, Herod's blood, like Ahab's, would have been licked up by dogs, and Herodias, like another Jezebel, would have been devoured of the same. But all this power for vengeance would have been a poor exchange for the gracious omnipotence of the Friend of sinners. Who would prefer the slayer of the priests to the Saviour of men? The top of Carmel was glorious when its intercession brought the rain for Israel, but how poor it is compared with Gethsemane, whose pleadings bring eternal life to millions! In company with Jesus we are at Elim beneath the palm tree, but with Elias we are in the wilderness beneath the stunted juniper. Who would exchange the excellency of Olivet for the terrors of Horeb? Yet I fear there are many who see Elias only. Prophecies of future woe fascinate them rather than thoughts of present salvation. Elias may be taken representatively as the preparer of Christ, for our Lord interpreted the prophecy of the coming of Elias as referring to John the Baptist. There are not a few who abide in the seeking, repenting, and preparing state,

and come not to "Jesus only." I am not myself fond of even using the term "preparing for Christ," for it seems to me that those are best prepared for Christ who most feel themselves unprepared; but there is no doubt a state of heart which prepares for faith—a sense of need, a consciousness of sin, a hatred of sin, all these are preparations for actual peace and comfort in Christ Jesus, and oh! how many there are who continue year after year merely in that preliminary condition, choosing the candle and refusing the sun. They do not become believers, but are always complaining that they do not feel as yet fit to come to Christ. They want Christ, they desire Christ, they would fain have Christ, but they stay in desire and longings, and go no further. They never get so far as to behold "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." The voice from heaven to them they always interpret as crying, "The axe is laid unto the root of the trees; bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance." Their conscience is thrilled, and thrilled again, by the voice that crieth in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord." Their souls are rent and torn by Elijah's challenge, "If the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him;" but they remain still halting between two opinions, trembling before Elias and not rejoicing before the Saviour. Unhappy men and women, so near the kingdom, and yet out of it; so near the feast, and yet perishing for want of the living bread. The word is near you (ah, how near!), and yet you receive it not. Remember, I pray you, that merely to prepare for a Saviour is not to be saved; that to have a sense of sin is not the same thing as being pardoned. Your repentance, unless you also believe in Jesus, is a repentance that needs to be repented of. At the girdle of John the Baptist the keys of heaven did never hang; Elias is not the door of salvation; preparation for Christ is not Christ, despair is not regeneration, doubt is not repentance. Only by faith in Jesus can you be saved, but complaining of yourselves is not faith. "Jesus only" is the way, the truth, and the life. "Jesus only" is the sinner's Saviour. O that your eyes may be opened, not to see Elias, not to see Moses, but to see "Jesus only."

You see, then, these three alternatives, but there was also another: a fourth thing might have happened when the disciples opened their eyes—*they might have seen Moses and Elias with Jesus*, even as in the transfiguration. At first sight it seems as if this would have been superior to that which they did enjoy. To walk down the mountain with that blessed trio, how great a privilege! How strong might they have been for the accomplishment of the divine purposes! Moses could preach the law and make men tremble, and then Jesus could follow with his gospel of grace and truth. Elias could flash the thunderbolt in their faces, and then Christ could have uplifted the humbled spirits. Would not the contrast have been delightful, and the connection inspiriting? Would not the assemblage of such divers kinds of forces have contributed to the greatest success? I think not. It is a vastly better thing to see "Jesus only," as a matter of perpetuity, than to see Moses and Elias with Jesus. It is night, I know it, for I see the moon and stars. The morning cometh, I know it cometh, for I see no longer many stars, only one remains, and that the morning star. But the full day has arrived, I know it has, for I cannot even see the morning star; all those guardians

and comforters of the night have disappeared; I see the sun only. Now, inasmuch as every man prefers the noon to midnight and to the twilight of dawn, the disappearance of Moses and Elias, indicating the full noontide of light, was the best thing that could happen. Why should we wish to see Moses? The ceremonials are all fulfilled in Jesus; the law is honoured and fulfilled in him. Let Moses go, his light is already in "Jesus only." And why should I wish to retain Elias? The prophecies are all fulfilled in Jesus, and the preparation of which Elias preached Jesus brings with himself. Let, then, Elias go, his light also is in "Jesus only." It is better to see Moses and Elias *in* Christ, than to see Moses and Elias *with* Christ. The absence of some things betokens a higher state of things than their presence. In all my library I do not know that I have a Lennie's English Grammar, or a Mavor's Spelling Book, or a Henry's First Latin Exercises, nor do I regret the absence of those valuable works, because I have got beyond the need of them. So the Christian wants not the symbols of Moses, or the preparations of Elias, for Christ is all, and we are complete in him. He who is conversant with the higher walks of sacred literature and reads in the golden book of Christ's heart, may safely lay the legal school-book by; this was good enough for the church's infancy, but we have now put away childish things. "We, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world: but when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." My brethren, the principle may be carried still further, for even the most precious things we treasure here below will disappear when fully realised in heaven. Beautiful for situation was the temple on Mount Zion, and though we believe not in the sanctity of buildings under the gospel, we love the place of solemn meeting where we are accustomed to offer prayer and praise; but when we enter into perfection we shall find no temple in heaven. We delight in our Sabbaths, and we would not give them up. O may England never lose her Sabbaths! but when we reach the Jerusalem above, we shall not observe the first day of the week above the rest, for we shall enjoy one everlasting Sabbath. No temple, because all temple; and no Sabbath-day, because all Sabbath in heaven. Thus you see the losing of some things is gain: it proves that we have got beyond their help. Just as we get beyond the nursery and all its appurtenances, and never regret it, because we have become men, so do Moses and Elias pass away, but we do not miss them, for "Jesus only" indicates our manhood. It is a sign of a higher growth when we can see Jesus only. My brethren, much of this sort of thing takes place with all Christians in their spiritual life. Do you remember when you were first of all convinced and awakened, what a great deal you thought of the preacher, and how much of the very style in which he spoke the gospel! But now, though you delight to listen to his voice, and find that God blesses you through him, yet you have sunk the thought of the preacher in the glory of the Master, you see no man save "Jesus

only." And as you grow in grace you will find that many doctrines and points of church government which once appeared to you to be all important, though you will still value them, will seem but of small consequence compared with Christ himself. Like the traveller ascending the Alps to reach the summit of Mont Blanc; at first he observes that lord of the hills as one horn among many, and often in the twistings of his upward path he sees other peaks which appear more elevated than that monarch of mountains; but when at last he is near the summit, he sees all the rest of the hills beneath his feet, and like a mighty wedge of alabaster Mont Blanc pierces the very clouds. So, as we grow in grace, other things sink and Jesus rises. They must decrease, but Christ must increase; until he alone fills the full horizon of your soul, and rises clear and bright and glorious up into the very heaven of God. O that we may thus see "Jesus only!"

II. Time hastens so rapidly, this morning, that I know not how I shall be able to compress the rest of my discourse into the allotted space. We must in the most rapid manner speak upon WHAT REALLY HAPPENED.

"They saw no man, save Jesus only." This was all they wanted to see for *their comfort.* They were sore afraid: Moses was gone, and he could give them no comfort; Elias was gone, he could speak no consolatory word; yet when Jesus said, "Be not afraid," their fears vanished. All the comfort, then, that any troubled heart wants, it can find in Christ. Go not to Moses, nor Elias, neither to the old covenant, nor to prophecy: go straight away to Jesus only. He was all the *Saviour* they wanted. Those three men all needed washing from sin; all needed to be kept and held on their way, but neither Moses nor Elias could have washed them from sin, nor have kept them from returning to it. But Jesus only could cleanse them, and did; Christ could lead them on, and did. Ah! brethren, all the Saviour we want, we find in Jesus only. The priests of Rome and their Anglican mimics officiously offer us their services. How glad they would be if we would bend our necks once again to their yoke! But we thank God we have seen "Jesus only," and if Moses has gone, and if Elias has gone, we are not likely to let the shavelings of Rome come in and fill up the vacancy. "Jesus only," is enough for our comfort, without either Anglican, Mosaic, or Roman priestcraft.

He, again, was to them, as they went afterwards into the world enough for *a Master.* "No man can serve two masters," and albeit, Moses and Elias might sink into the second rank, yet might there have been some difficulty in the follower's mind if the leadership were divided. But when they had no leader but Jesus, his guidance, his direction and command were quite sufficient. He, in the day of battle, was enough for their captain; in the day of difficulty, enough for their

direction. They wanted none but Jesus. At this day, my brethren, we have no Master but Christ; we submit ourselves to no vicar of God; we bow down ourselves before no great leader of a sect, neither to Calvin, nor to Arminius, to Wesley, or Whitfield. "One is our Master," and that one is enough, for we have learned to see the wisdom of God and the power of God in Jesus only.

He was enough as *their power* for future life, as well as their Master. They needed not ask Moses to lend them official dignity, nor to ask Elias to bring them fire from heaven, Jesus would give them of his Holy Spirit, and they should be strong enough for every enterprise. And, brethren, all the power you and I want to preach the gospel, and to conquer souls to the truth, we can find in Jesus only. You want no sacred state-prestige, no pretended apostolical succession, no prelatical unction; Jesus will anoint you with his Holy Spirit, and you shall be plenteously endowed with power from on high, so that you shall do great things and prevail. "Jesus only." Why, they wanted no other motive to constrain them to use their power aright. It is enough incentive to a man to be allowed to live for such a one as Christ. Only let the thought of Christ fill the enlightened intellect, and it must conquer the sanctified affections. Let but Jesus be well understood as the everlasting God who bowed the heavens, and came down and suffered shame, and ignominy, that he might redeem us from the wrath to come; let us get but a sight of the thorn-crowned head, and those dear eyes all red with weeping, and those sweet cheeks bruised and battered by the scoffers' fists; let us but look into the tender heart that was broken with griefs unutterable for our sakes, and the love of Christ must constrain us, and we shall thus "judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." In the point of motive believers do not need the aid of Moses. That you ought to do such a thing because otherwise you will be punished will but little strengthen you, nor will you be much aided by the spirit of prophecy which leads you to hope that in the millennial period you will be made a ruler over many cities. It will be enough to you that you serve the Lord Christ; it suffices you if you may be enabled to honour him, to deck his crown, to magnify his name. Here is stimulus sufficient for martyrs and confessors, "Jesus only." Brethren, it is all the *gospel* we have to preach, it is all the gospel we want to preach—it is the only ground of confidence which we have for ourselves; it is all the hope we have to set before others. I know that in this age there is an overweening desire for that which has the aspect of being intellectual, deep, and novel; and we are often informed that there are to be developments

in religion even as in science; and we are despised as being hardly men, certainly not thinking men, if we preach to-day what was preached two hundred years ago. Brethren, we preach to-day what was preached eighteen hundred years ago, and wherein others make alterations they create deformities, and not improvements. We are not ashamed to avow that the old truth of Christ alone is everlasting; all else has gone or shall go, but the gospel towers above the wrecks of time: to us "Jesus only" remains as the sole topic of our ministry, and we want nothing else.

For "Jesus only" shall be *our reward*, to be with him where he is, to behold his glory, to be like him when we shall see him as he is, we ask no other heaven. No other bliss can our soul conceive of. The Lord grant we may have a fulness of this, and "Jesus only" shall be throughout eternity our delight.

There was here space to have dilated at great length, but we have rather given you the heads of thought than the thoughts themselves. Though the apostles saw "Jesus only," they saw quite sufficient, for Jesus is enough for time and eternity, enough to live by and enough to die by.

III. I must close, though I would fain linger. Brethren, let us think of WHAT WE DESIRE MAY HAPPEN to all now present.

I do desire for my fellow Christians and for myself, that more and more the great object of our thoughts, motives, and acts may be "Jesus only." I believe that whenever our religion is most vital it is most full of Christ. Moreover, when it is most practical, downright, and common sense, it always gets nearest to Jesus. I can bear witness that whenever I am in deeps of sorrow, nothing will do for me but "Jesus only." I can rest in some degree in the externals of religion, its outward escarpments and bulwarks, when I am in health; but I retreat to the innermost citadel of our holy faith, namely, to the very heart of Christ, when my spirit is assailed by temptation, or besieged with sorrow and anguish. What is more, my witness is that whenever I have high spiritual enjoyments, enjoyments rich, rare, celestial, they are always connected with Jesus only, other religious things may give some kind of joy, and joy that is healthy too, but the sublimest, the most inebriating, the most divine of all joys, must be found in Jesus only. In fine, I find if I want to labour much, I must live on Jesus only; if I desire to suffer patiently, I must feed on Jesus only; if I wish to wrestle with God successfully, I must plead Jesus only; if I aspire to conquer sin, I must use the blood of Jesus only; if I pant to learn the mysteries of heaven, I must seek the teachings of Jesus only. I believe that anything which we add to Christ lowers our position, and that the more elevated our soul becomes, the more nearly like what it is to be when it shall enter into the region of the perfect, the more completely

everything else will sink, die out, and Jesus, Jesus, Jesus only, will be first and last, and midst and without end, the Alpha and Omega of every thought of head and pulse of heart. May it be so with every Christian!

There are others here who are not yet believers in Jesus, and our desire is that this may happen to them, that they may see "Jesus only." "Oh," saith one, "Sir, I want to see my sins. My heart is very hard, and very proud; I want to see my sins." Friend, I also desire that you should, but I desire that you may see them not on yourself, but on Jesus only. No sight of sin ever brings such true humiliation of spirit as when the soul sees its sins laid on the Saviour. Sinner, I know you have thought of sins as lying on yourself, and you have been trying to feel their weight, but there is a happier and better view still. Sin was laid on Jesus, and it made him to be covered with a bloody sweat; it nailed him to the cross; it made him cry, "Lama Sabachthani;" it bowed him into the dust of death. Why, friend, if you see sin on Jesus you will hate it, you will bemoan it, you will abhor it. You need not look evermore to sin as burdening yourself, see Jesus only, and the best kind of repentance will follow. "Ah, but," saith another, "I want to feel my need of Christ more." You will see your need all the better if you look at Jesus only. Many a time an appetite for a thing is created by the sight of it. Why, there are some of us who can hardly be trusted in a bookseller's shop, because though we might have done very well at home without a certain volume, we no sooner see it than we are in urgent need of it. So often is it with some of you about other matters, so that it becomes most dangerous to let you see, because you want as soon as you see. A sight of Jesus, of what he is to sinners, of what he makes sinners, of what he is in himself, will more tend to make you feel your need of him than all your poring over your poor miserable self. You will get no further there, look to "Jesus only." "Ay," saith another, "but I want to read my title clear, I want to know that I have an interest in Jesus." You will best read your interest in Christ by looking at him. If I want to know whether a certain estate is mine, do I look into my own heart to see if I have a right to it? but I look into the archives of the estate, I search testaments and covenants. Now, Christ Jesus is God's covenant with the people, a leader and commander to the people. To-day, I personally can read my title clear to heaven, and shall I tell you how I read it? Not because I feel all I wish to feel, nor because I am what I hope I yet shall be, but I read in the word that "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners," I am a sinner, even the devil cannot tell me I am not. O precious Saviour, then thou hast come to save such as I am. Then I see it written again, "He that believeth and is baptised, shall be saved." I have believed, and have been baptised; I know I trust alone in Jesus, and that is believing.

As surely then as there is a God in heaven I shall be in heaven one day. It must be so, because unless God be a liar, he that believeth must be saved. You see it is not by looking within, it is by looking to Jesus only that you perceive at last your name graven on his hands. I wish to have Christ's name written on my heart, but if I want assurance, I have to look at his heart till I see my name written there. O turn your eye away from your sin and your emptiness to his righteousness and his fulness. See the sweat drops bloody as they fall in Gethsemane, see his heart pierced and pouring out blood and water for the sins of men upon Calvary! There is life in a look at him! O look to him, and though it be Jesus only, though Moses should condemn you, and Elias should alarm you, yet "Jesus only" shall be enough to comfort and enough to save you. May God grant us grace every one of us to take for our motto in life, for our hope in death, and for our joy in eternity, "Jesus only." May God bless you for the sake of "Jesus only." Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Matthew xvii.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

FAITH: WHAT IS IT? HOW CAN IT BE OBTAINED?

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 17TH, 1881, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"By grace are ye saved through faith."—Ephesians ii. 8.

I MEAN to dwell mainly upon that expression, "Through faith." I call attention, however, first of all, to the fountain head of our salvation, which is the grace of God. "By grace are ye saved." Because God is gracious, therefore sinful men are forgiven, converted, purified, and saved. It is not because of anything in them, or that ever can be in them, that they are saved; but because of the boundless love, goodness, pity, compassion, mercy, and grace of God. Tarry a moment, then, at the well-head. Behold the pure river of water of life as it proceeds out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. What an abyss is the grace of God! Who can fathom it? Like all the rest of the divine attributes, it is infinite. God is full of love, for "God is love"; God is full of goodness, and the very name "God" is but short for "good." Unbounded goodness and love enter into the very essence of the Godhead. It is because "his mercy endureth for ever" that men are not destroyed; because "his compassions fail not" that sinners are brought to himself and forgiven. Right well remember this, for else you may fall into error by fixing your minds so much upon the faith which is the channel of salvation as to forget the grace which is the fountain and source even of faith itself. Faith is the work of God's grace in us. No man can say that Jesus is the Christ but by the Holy Ghost. "No man cometh unto me," saith Christ, "except the Father which hath sent me draw him." So that faith, which is coming to Christ, is the result of divine drawing. Grace is the first and last moving cause of salvation, and faith, important as it is, is only an important part of the machinery which grace employs. We are saved "through faith," but it is "by grace." Sound forth those words as with the archangel's trumpet: "By grace are ye saved."

Faith occupies the position of a channel or conduit-pipe. Grace is the fountain and the stream: faith is the aqueduct along which the flood of mercy flows down to refresh the thirsty sons of men. It is a great pity when the aqueduct is broken. It is a sad sight to see around

Rome the many noble aqueducts which no longer convey water into the city, because the arches are broken and the marvellous structures are in ruins. The aqueduct must be kept entire to convey the current; and, even so, faith must be true and sound, leading right up to God and coming right down to ourselves, that it may become a serviceable channel of mercy to our souls. Still, I again remind you that faith is the channel or aqueduct, and not the fountain head, and we must not look so much to it as to exalt it above the divine source of all blessing which lies in the grace of God. Never make a Christ out of your faith, nor think of it as if it were the independent source of your salvation. Our life is found in "looking unto Jesus," not in looking to our own faith. By faith all things become possible to us; yet the power is not in the faith, but in the God upon whom faith relies. Grace is the locomotive, and faith is the chain by which the carriage of the soul is attached to the great motive power. The righteousness of faith is not the moral excellence of faith, but the righteousness of Jesus Christ which faith grasps and appropriates. The peace within the soul is not derived from the contemplation of our own faith, but it comes to us from him who is our peace, the hem of whose garment faith touches, and virtue comes out of him into the soul.

However, it is a very important thing that we look well to the channel, and therefore at this time we will consider it, as God, the Holy Ghost, shall enable us. Faith, *what is it?* Faith, *why is it selected as the channel of blessing?* Faith, *how can it be obtained and increased?*

I. FAITH, WHAT IS IT? What is this faith concerning which it is said, "By grace are ye saved *through faith*"? There are many descriptions of faith, but almost all the definitions I have met with have made me understand it less than I did before I saw them. The negro said when he read the chapter that he would confound it, and it is very likely that he did so, though he meant to expound it. So, brethren, we may explain faith till nobody understands it. I hope I shall not be guilty of that fault. Faith is the simplest of all things, and perhaps because of its simplicity it is the more difficult to explain.

What is faith? *It is made up of three things—knowledge, belief, and trust. Knowledge* comes first. Romanist divines hold that a man can believe what he does not know. Perhaps a Romanist can; but I cannot. "How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?" I want to be informed of a fact before I can possibly believe it. I believe this, I believe that; but I cannot say that I believe a great many things of which I have never heard. "Faith cometh by hearing": we must first hear, in order that we may know what is to be believed. "They that know thy name will put their trust in thee." A measure of knowledge is essential to faith: hence the importance of getting knowledge. "Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live,"—such was the word of the ancient prophet, and it is the word of the gospel still. Search the Scriptures and learn what the Holy Spirit teacheth concerning Christ and his salvation. Seek to know God,—"that God is, and is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him." May he give you "the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord." Know the gospel: know what the good news is, how it talks of free forgiveness, and of change of heart, of adoption

into the family of God, and of countless other blessings. Know God, know his gospel, and know especially Christ Jesus the Son of God, the Saviour of men, united to us by his human nature, and united to God, seeing he is divine, and thus able to act as mediator between God and man, able to lay his hand upon both, and to be the connecting link between the sinner and the Judge of all the earth. Endeavour to know more and more of Christ. After Paul had been converted more than twenty years, he tells the Philippians that he desired to know Christ; and depend upon it, the more we know of Jesus, the more we shall wish to know of him, that so our faith in him may increase. Endeavour especially to know the doctrine of the sacrifice of Christ, for that is the centre of the target at which faith aims; that is the point upon which saving faith mainly fixes itself, that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." Know that he was made a curse for us, as it is written, "Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree." Drink deep into the doctrine of the substitutionary work of Christ, for therein lies the sweetest possible comfort to the guilty sons of men, since the Lord "made him to be sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Faith, then, begins with knowledge; hence the value of being taught in divine truth; for to know Christ is life eternal.

Then the mind goes on to *believe* that these things are true. The soul believes that God is, and that he hears the cries of sincere hearts; that the gospel is from God; that justification by faith is the grand truth that God hath revealed in these last days by his Spirit more clearly than before. Then the heart believes that Jesus is verily and in truth our God and Saviour, the Redeemer of men, the prophet, priest, and king unto his people. Dear hearers, I pray that you may at once come to this. Get firmly to believe that "the blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, cleanseth us from all sin"; that his sacrifice is complete and fully accepted of God on man's behalf, so that he that believeth on Jesus is not condemned. So far you have made an advance towards faith, and one more ingredient is needed to complete it, which is *trust*. Commit yourself to the merciful God; rest your hope on the gracious gospel; trust your soul on the dying and living Saviour; wash away your sins in the atoning blood; accept his perfect righteousness, and all is well. Trust is the life-blood of faith: there is no saving faith without it. The Puritans were accustomed to explain faith by the word "recumbency." You know what it means. You see me leaning upon this rail, leaning with all my weight upon it; even thus lean upon Christ. It would be a better illustration still if I were to stretch myself at full length and rest my whole person upon a rock, lying flat upon it. Fall flat upon Christ. Cast yourself upon him, rest in him, commit yourself to him. That done, you have exercised saving faith. Faith is not a blind thing; for faith begins with knowledge. It is not a speculative thing; for faith believes facts of which it is sure. It is not an unpractical, dreamy thing; for faith trusts, and stakes its destiny upon the truth of revelation. Faith *ventures* its all upon the truth of God; it is not a pleasant word to use, but the poet employed it, and it suggests my meaning:

> "Venture on him, venture wholly;
> Let no other trust intrude."

That is one way of describing what faith is: I wonder whether I have "confounded" it already.

Let me try again. *Faith is believing that Christ is what he is said to be, that he will do what he has promised to do, and expecting this of him.* The Scriptures speak of Jesus Christ as being God, God in human flesh: as being perfect in his character; as being made a sin-offering on our behalf; as bearing sin in his own body on the tree. The Scripture speaks of him as having finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness. The Scriptures further tell us that he "rose again," that he "ever liveth to make intercession for us," that he has gone up into the glory, and has taken possession of heaven on the behalf of his people, and that he will shortly come again "to judge the world in righteousness and his people with equity." We are most firmly to believe that it is even so; for this is the testimony of God the Father when he said, "This is my beloved Son; hear ye him." This also is testified by God the Holy Spirit; for the Spirit has borne witness to Christ, both by the Word and by divers miracles, and by his working in the hearts of men. We are to believe this testimony to be true.

Faith also believes that Christ will do what he has promised; that if he has promised to cast out none that come to him, it is certain that he will not cast us out if we come to him. Faith believes that if Jesus said, "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life," it must be true; and if we get this living water from Christ it will abide in us, and will well up within us in streams of holy life. Whatever Christ has promised to do he will do, and we must believe this so as to look for pardon, justification, preservation, and eternal glory from his hands, according as he has promised.

Then comes the next necessary step. Jesus is what he is said to be, Jesus will do what he says he will do; therefore we must each one *trust him*, saying, "He will be to me what he says he is, and he will do to me what he has promised to do; I leave myself in the hands of him who is appointed to save, that he may save me. I rest upon his promise that he will do even as he has said." This is a saving faith, and he that hath it hath everlasting life. Whatever his dangers and difficulties, whatever his darkness and depression, whatever his infirmities and sins, he that believeth thus on Christ Jesus is not condemned, and shall never come into condemnation. May that explanation be of some service. I trust it may be used by the Spirit of God.

But now I thought, as it was a very hot and heavy morning, that I had better give you a number of illustrations, lest anybody should be inclined to go to sleep. If anybody should be drowsy, will his next neighbour just nudge him a little by accident; for it may be as well while we are here to be awake, especially with such a subject on hand as this. The illustrations will be such as have been commonly used, and perhaps I may be able to give one or two of my own. Faith exists in various degrees, according to the amount of knowledge, or other cause. Sometimes faith is little more than a simple *clinging* to Christ: a sense of dependence, and a willingness so to depend. When you are down at the seaside, as we might all of us wish to be, you will see the limpet sticking to the rock; you walk with a soft tread up to the rock with

your walking stick and strike the limpet with a rapid blow, and off he comes. Try the next limpet in that way. You have given him warning; he heard the blow with which you struck his neighbour, and he clings with all his might. You will never get him off; not you! Strike, and strike again, but you may as soon break the rock. Our little friend, the limpet, does not know much, but he clings. He cannot tell us much about what he is clinging to, he is not acquainted with the geological formation of the rock, but he clings. He has found something to cling to, that is his little bit of knowledge, and he uses it by clinging to the rock of his salvation; it is the limpet's life to cling. Thousands of God's people have no more faith than this; they know enough to cling to Jesus with all their heart and soul, and this suffices. Jesus Christ is to them a Saviour strong and mighty, and like a rock immovable and immutable; they cleave to him for dear life, and this clinging saves them.

God gives to his people the propensity to cling. Look at the sweet pea which grows in your garden. Perhaps it has fallen down upon the gravel walk. Lift it up against the laurel or the trellis, or put a stick near it, and it catches hold directly, because there are little hooks ready prepared with which it grasps anything which comes in its way: it was meant to grow upwards, and so it is provided with tendrils. Every child of God has his tendrils about him—thoughts, and desires, and hopes with which he hooks on to Christ and the promise. Though this is a very simple sort of faith, it is a very complete and effectual form of it, and, in fact, it is the heart of all faith, and that to which we are often driven when we are in deep trouble, or when our mind is somewhat bemuddled by our being sickly or depressed in spirit. We can cling when we can do nothing else, and that is the very soul of faith. O poor heart, if thou dost not yet know as much about the gospel as we could wish thee to know, cling to what thou dost know. If as yet thou art only like a lamb that wades a little into the river of life, and not like leviathan who stirs the mighty deep to the bottom, yet drink; for it is drinking, and not diving, that will save thee. Cling, then! Cling to Jesus; for that is faith.

Another form of faith is this, in which a man depends upon another from a knowledge of the superiority of that other, and *follows* him. I do not think the limpet knows much about the rock, but in this next phase of faith there is more knowledge. A blind man trusts himself with his guide because he knows that his friend can see, and trusting, he walks where his guide conducts him. If the poor man is born blind he does not know what sight is; but he knows that there is such a thing as sight, and that it is possessed by his friend, and therefore he freely puts his hand into the hand of the seeing one, and follows his leadership. This is as good an image of faith as well can be; we know that Jesus has about him merit, and power, and blessing which we do not possess, and therefore we gladly trust ourselves to him, and he never betrays our confidence.

Every boy that goes to school has to exert faith while *learning*. His schoolmaster teaches him geography, and instructs him as to the form of the earth, and the existence of certain great cities and empires. The boy does not himself know that these things are true, except that he believes

his teacher, and the books put into his hands. That is what you will have to do with Christ if you are to be saved—you must just know because he tells you, and believe because he assures you it is even so, and trust yourself with him because he promises you that salvation will be the result. Almost all that you and I know has come to us by faith. A scientific discovery has been made, and we are sure of it. On what ground do we believe it? On the authority of certain well-known men of learning, whose repute is established. We have never made or seen their experiments, but we believe their witness. Just so you are to do with regard to Christ: because he teaches you certain truths you are to be his disciple, and believe his words, and trust yourself with him. He is infinitely superior to you, and presents himself to your confidence as your Master and Lord. If you will receive him and his words you shall be saved.

Another and a higher form of faith is that faith which *grows out of love.* Why does a boy trust his father? You and I know a little more about his father than he does, and we do not rely upon him quite so implicitly; but the reason why the child trusts his father is because he loves him. Blessed and happy are they who have a sweet faith in Jesus, intertwined with deep affection for him. They are charmed with his character and delighted with his mission, they are carried away by the lovingkindness that he has manifested, and now they cannot help trusting him because they so much admire, revere, and love him. It is hard to make you doubt a person whom you love. If you are at last driven to it, then comes the awful passion of jealousy, which is strong as death and cruel as the grave: but till such a crushing of the heart shall come, love is all trustfulness and confidence.

The way of loving trust in the Saviour may thus be illustrated. A lady is the wife of the most eminent physician of the day. She is seized with a dangerous illness, and is smitten down by its power; yet she is wonderfully calm and quiet, for her husband has made this disease his special study, and has healed thousands similarly afflicted. She is not in the least troubled, for she feels perfectly safe in the hands of one so dear to her, in whom skill and love are blended in their highest forms. Her faith is reasonable and natural, her husband from every point of view deserves it of her. This is the kind of faith which the happiest of believers exercise towards Christ. There is no physician like him, none can save as he can; we love him, and he loves us, and therefore we put ourselves into his hands, accept whatever he prescribes, and do whatever he bids. We feel that nothing can be wrongly ordered while he is the director of our affairs, for he loves us too well to let us perish, or suffer a single needless pang.

Faith also *realizes* the presence of the living God and Saviour, and thus it breeds in the soul a beautiful calm and quiet like that which was seen in a little child in the time of tempest. Her mother was alarmed, but the sweet girl was pleased; she clapped her hands with delight. Standing at the window when the flashes came most vividly, she cried in childish accents, "Look, mamma! How beautiful! How beautiful!" Her mother said, "My dear, come away, the lightning is terrible;" but she begged to be allowed to look out and see the lovely light which God was making all over the sky, for she was sure God would

not do his little child any harm. "But hearken to the terrible thunder," said her mother. "Did you not say, mamma, that God was speaking in the thunder?" "Yes," said her trembling parent. "O," said the darling, "how nice it is to hear him. He talks very loud, but I think it is because he wants the deaf people to hear him. Is it not so, mamma?" Thus she went talking on; as merry as a bird was she, for God was real to her, and she trusted him. To her the lightning was God's beautiful light, and the thunder was God's wonderful voice, and she was happy. I dare say her mother knew a good deal about the laws of nature and the energy of electricity; and little was the comfort which her knowledge brought her. The child's knowledge was less showy, but it was far more certain and precious. We are so conceited nowadays that we are too proud to be comforted by self-evident truth, and prefer to make ourselves wretched with questionable theories. Hood sang a deep spiritual truth when he merrily said,

"I remember, I remember,
The fir trees dark and high;
I used to think their slender tops
Were close against the sky;
It was a childish ignorance,
But now 'tis little joy
To know I'm farther off from heav'n
Than when I was a boy."

For my own part I would rather be a child again than grow perversely wise. Faith, is to be a child towards Christ, believing in him as a real and present person, at this very moment near us, and ready to bless us. This may seem to be a childish fancy; but it is such childishness are we must all come to if we would be happy in the Lord "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Faith takes Christ at his word, as a child believes his father, and trusts him in all simplicity with past, present, and future. God give us such faith!

A firm form of *faith arises out of assured knowledge;* this comes of growth in grace, and is the faith which believes Christ because it knows him, trusts him because it has proved him to be infallibly faithful. This faith asks not for signs and tokens, but bravely believes. Look at the faith of the master mariner—I have often wondered at it. He looses his cable, he steams away from the shore. For days, weeks, or even months he never sees sail or shore, yet on he goes day and night without fear, till one morning he finds himself just opposite to the desired haven towards which he has been steering. How has he found his way over the trackless deep? He has trusted in his compass, his nautical almanack, his glass, and the heavenly bodies, and obeying their guidance, without sighting shore, he has steered so accurately that he has not to change a point to get into port. It is a wonderful thing that sailing without sight. Spiritually it is a blessed thing to leave the shores of sight, and say, "Good-bye to inward feelings, cheering providences, signs, tokens, and so forth: I believe in God, and I steer for heaven straight away." "Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed:" to them shall be administered an abundant entrance at the last, and a safe voyage on the way.

This is the faith which makes it easy *to commit our soul and all its eternal interests into the Saviour's keeping.* One man goes to the bank and puts his money into it with a measure of confidence; but another has looked into the bank's accounts, and has been behind the scenes and made sure of its having a large reserve of well invested capital; he puts in his money with the utmost assurance. He knows and is established in his faith, and so he cheerfully commits his all to the bank. Even so, we who know Christ are glad to place our whole being in his hands, knowing that he is able to keep us even unto the end.

God give us more and more of an assured confidence in Jesus until it comes to be an unwavering faith, so that we never doubt, but unquestioningly believe. Look at the ploughman; he labours with his plough in the wintry months, when there is not a bough on the tree nor a bird that sings to cheer him, and after he has ploughed he takes the precious corn from the granary, of which perhaps he hath little enough, and he buries it in the furrows, assured that it will come up again. Because he has seen a harvest fifty times already he looks for another, and in faith he scatters the precious grain. To all appearance, the most absurd thing that ever was done by mortal man is to throw away good corn, burying it in the ground. If you had never seen or heard of its results, it would seem the way of waste and not the work of husbandry; yet the farmer has no doubt, he longs to be allowed to cast away his seed, in faith he even covets fair weather that he may bury his corn; and if you tell him that he is doing an absurd thing, he smiles at your ignorance, and tells you that thus harvests come. This is a fair picture of the faith which grows of experience: it helps us to act in a manner contrary to appearances, it leads us to commit our all to the keeping of Christ, burying our hopes and our very lives with him in joyful confidence that if we be dead with him we shall also live with him. Jesus Christ who rose from the dead will raise us up through his death unto newness of life, and give us a harvest of joy and peace.

Give up everything into the hand of Christ, and you shall have it back with an abundant increase. May we get strong faith, so that as we have no doubt of the rising and setting of the sun, so we may never doubt the Saviour's working for us in every hour of need. We have already trusted in our Lord, and have never been confounded, therefore let us go on to rely upon him more and more implicitly; for never shall our faith in him surpass the bounds of his deservings. Have faith in God, and then hear Jesus say, "Ye believe in God, believe also in me."

II. Thus far have I done my best to answer what faith is; we shall now enquire, WHY FAITH IS SELECTED AS THE CHANNEL OF SALVATION? "By grace are ye saved *through faith.*" It becomes us to be modest in answering such a question, for God's ways are not always to be understood; but, as far as we can tell, faith has been selected as the channel of grace because *there is a natural adaptation* in faith to be used as the receiver. Suppose that I am about to give a poor man an alms: I put it into his hand—why? Well, it would hardly be fitting to put it into his ear, or to lay it upon his foot; the hand seems made on purpose to receive. So faith in the mental body is created on purpose to be a receiver: it is the hand of the man, and there is a fitness in bestowing grace by its means. Do let me put this very plainly. Faith

which receives Christ is as simple an act as when your child receives an apple from you, because you hold it out and promise to give it the apple if it comes for it. The belief and the receiving relate only to an apple, but they make up precisely the same act as the faith which deals with eternal salvation, and what the child's hand is to the apple, that your faith is to the perfect salvation of Christ. The child's hand does not make the apple, nor alter the apple, it only takes it; and faith is chosen by God to be the receiver of salvation, because it does not pretend to make salvation, nor to help in it, but it receives it.

Faith, again, is doubtless selected because *it gives all the glory to God.* It is of faith that it might be by grace, and it is of grace that there may be no boasting; for God cannot endure pride. Paul saith, "Not of works, lest any man should boast." The hand which receives charity does not say, "I am to be thanked for accepting the gift"; that would be absurd. When the hand conveys bread to the mouth it does not say to the body, "Thank me, for I feed you." It is a very simple thing that the hand does, though a very necessary thing; but it never arrogates glory to itself for what it does. So God has selected faith to receive the unspeakable gift of his grace because it cannot take to itself any credit, but must adore the gracious God who is the giver of all good.

Next, God selects faith as the channel of salvation because *it is a sure method, linking man with God.* When man confides in God there is a point of union between them, and that union guarantees blessing. Faith saves us because it makes us cling to God, and so brings us into connection with him. I have used the following illustration before, but I must repeat it, because I cannot think of a better. I am told that years ago above the Falls of Niagara a boat was upset, and two men were being carried down the current, when persons on the shore managed to float a rope out to them, which rope was seized by them both. One of them held fast to it and was safely drawn to the bank; but the other, seeing a great log come floating by, unwisely let go the rope and clung to the log, for it was the bigger thing of the two, and apparently better to cling to. Alas, the log with the man on it, went right over the vast abyss, because there was no union between the log and the shore. The size of the log was no benefit to him who grasped it; it needed a connection with the shore to produce safety. So when a man trusts to his works, or to sacraments, or to anything of that sort, he will not be saved, because there is no junction between him and Christ; but faith, though it may seem to be like a slender cord, is in the hand of the great God on the shore side; infinite power pulls in the connecting line, and thus draws the man from destruction. Oh, the blessedness of faith, because it unites us to God!

Faith is chosen, again, because *it touches the springs of action.* I wonder whether I shall be wrong if I say that we never do anything except through faith of some sort. If I walk across this platform it is because I believe my legs will carry me. A man eats because he believes in the necessity of food. Columbus discovered America because he believed that there was another continent beyond the ocean: many another grand deed has also been born of faith, for faith works wonders. Commoner things are done on the same principle; faith in its natural form is an all-prevailing force. God gives salvation to our faith, because he

has thus touched the secret spring of all our emotions and actions. He has, so to speak, taken possession of the battery, and now he can send the sacred current to every part of our nature. When we believe in Christ, and the heart has come into the possession of God, then are we saved from sin, and are moved towards repentance, holiness, zeal, prayer, consecration, and every other gracious thing.

Faith, again, *has the power of working by love;* it touches the secret spring of the affections, and draws the heart towards God. Faith is an act of the understanding; but it also proceeds from the heart. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness;" and hence God gives salvation to faith because it resides next door to the affections, and is near akin to love, and love, you know, is that which purifies the soul. Love to God is obedience, love is holiness; to love God and to love man is to be conformed to the image of Christ, and this is salvation.

Moreover, *faith creates peace and joy;* he that hath it rests, and is tranquil, is glad, and joyous; and this is a preparation for heaven. God gives all the heavenly gifts to faith, because faith worketh in us the very life and spirit which are to be eternally manifested in the upper and better world. I have hastened over these points that I might not weary you on a day when, however willing the spirit may be, the flesh is weak.

III. We close with the third point: How can we obtain and increase our faith? A very earnest question this to many. They say they want to believe but cannot. A great deal of nonsense is talked upon this subject. Let us be practical in our dealing with it. "What am I to do in order to believe?" The shortest way is to believe, and if the Holy Spirit has made you honest and candid, you will believe as soon as the truth is set before you. Anyhow, the gospel command is clear: "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

But still, *if you have a difficulty, take it before God in prayer.* Tell the great Father exactly what it is that puzzles you, and beg him by his Holy Spirit to solve the question. If I cannot believe a statement in a book I am glad to enquire of the author what he meant, and if he is a true man his explanation will satisfy me: much more will the divine explanation satisfy the heart of the true seeker. The Lord is willing to make himself known; go to him, and see if it be not so.

Furthermore, if faith seem difficult, it is possible that God the Holy Spirit will enable you to believe if you *hear very frequently and earnestly that which you are commanded to believe.* We believe many things because we have heard them so often. Do you not find it so in common life, that if you hear a thing fifty times a day, at last you come to believe it? Some men have come to believe that which is false by this process: I should not wonder but what God often blesses this method in working faith concerning that which is true, for it is written, "Faith cometh by hearing." If I earnestly and attentively hear the gospel, it may be that one of these days I shall find myself believing that which I hear, through the blessed operation of the Spirit upon my mind.

If that, however, should seem poor advice, I would add next, *consider the testimony of others.* The Samaritans believed because of what the woman told them concerning Jesus. Many of our beliefs arise out of the testimony of others. I believe that there is such a country as Japan: I never saw it, and yet I believe that there is such a place because others

have been there. I believe I shall die: I have never died, but a great many have done so whom I once knew, and I have a conviction that I shall die also; the testimony of many convinces me of this fact. Listen, then, to those who tell you how they were saved, how they were pardoned, how they have been changed in character: if you will but listen you will find that somebody just like yourself has been saved. If you have been a thief, you will find that a thief rejoiced to wash away his sin in the fountain of Christ's blood. You that have been unchaste in life, you will find that men who have fallen that way have been cleansed and changed. If you are in despair, you have only to get among God's people, and enquire a little, and some who have been equally in despair with yourself will tell you how he saved them. As you listen to one after another of those who have tried the word of God, and proved it, the divine Spirit will lead you to believe. Have you not heard of the African who was told by the missionary that water sometimes became so hard that a man could walk on it? He declared that he believed a great many things the missionary had told him; but he never would believe that. When he came to England it came to pass that one frosty day he saw the river frozen, but he would not venture on it. He knew that it was a river, and he was certain that he would be drowned if he ventured upon it. He could not be induced to walk the ice till his friend went upon it; then he was persuaded, and trusted himself where others had ventured. So, mayhap, while you see others believe, and notice their joy and peace, you will yourself be gently led to believe. It is one of God's ways of helping us to faith.

A better plan still is this,—*note the authority upon which you are commanded to believe*, and this will greatly help you. The authority is not mine, or you might well reject it. It is not even the pope's, or you might even reject that. But you are commanded to believe upon the authority of God himself. *He* bids you believe in Jesus Christ, and you must not refuse to obey your Maker. The foreman of a certain works in the north had often heard the gospel, but he was troubled with the fear that he might not come to Christ. His good master one day sent a card round to the works—"Come to my house immediately after work." The foreman appeared at his master's door, and the master came out, and said somewhat roughly, "What do you want, John, troubling me at this time? Work is done, what right have you here?" "Sir," said he, "I had a card from you saying that I was to come after work." "Do you mean to say that merely because you had a card from me you are to come up to my house and call me out after business hours?" "Well, sir," replied the foreman, "I do not understand you, but it seems to me that, as you sent for me, I had a right to come." "Come in, John," said his master, "I have another message that I want to read to you," and he sat down and read these words—"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Do you think after such a message from Christ that you can be wrong in going to him?" The poor man saw it all at once, and believed, because he saw that he had good warrant and authority for believing. So have you, poor soul; you have good authority for coming to Christ, for the Lord himself bids you trust him.

If that does not settle you, *think over what it is that you have to*

believe,—that the Lord Jesus Christ suffered in the room and place and stead of men, and is able to save all who trust him. Why, this is the most blessed fact that ever men were told to believe: the most suitable, the most comforting, the most divine truth that ever was set before men. I advise you to think much upon it, and search out the grace and love which it contains. Study the four Evangelists, study Paul's epistles, and then see if the message is not such a credible one that you are forced to believe it.

If that does not do, then *think upon the person of Jesus Christ*—think of who he is and what he did, and where he is now, and what he is now; think often and deeply. When he, even such an one as he, bids you trust him, surely then your heart will be persuaded. For how can you doubt *him?*

If none of these things avail, then there is something wrong about you altogether, and my last word is, *submit yourself to God!* May the Spirit of God take away your enmity and make you yield. You are a rebel, a proud rebel, and that is why you do not believe your God. Give up your rebellion; throw down your weapons; yield at discretion; surrender to your King. I believe that never did a soul throw up its hands in self-despair, and cry, "Lord, I yield," but what faith became easy to it before long. It is because you still have a quarrel with God, and intend to have your own will and your own way, that therefore you cannot believe. "How can ye believe," said Christ, "that have honour one of another?" Proud self creates unbelief. Submit, O man. Yield to your God, and then shall you sweetly believe in your Saviour. God bless you, for Christ's sake, and bring you at this very moment to believe in the Lord Jesus. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Ephesians ii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—911, 554.

NOTE.—While revising this sermon I felt moved to ask my readers to circulate it. I tried to be very simple, and I think I succeeded. If you, dear reader, think the sermon likely to show the way of salvation to those around you, will you not get extra copies and give them away? The preacher of the sermon and the giver of it will rejoice together if, by their united effort, men are led to faith in Jesus.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE LITTLE DOGS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 6TH, 1876, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table."—Matthew xv. 26, 27.

"But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs. And she answered and said unto him, Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs."—Mark vii. 27, 28.

I TAKE the two records of Matthew and Mark that we may have the whole matter before us. May the Holy Spirit bless our meditations thereon.

The brightest jewels are often found in the darkest places. Christ had not found such faith, no, not in Israel, as he discovered in this poor Canaanitish woman. The borders and fringes of the land were more fruitful than the centre, where the husbandry had been more abundant. In the headlands of the field, where the farmer does not expect to grow much beyond weeds, the Lord Jesus found the richest ear of corn that as yet had filled his sheaf. Let those of us who reap after him be encouraged to expect the same experience. Never let us speak of any district as too depraved to yield us converts, nor of any class of persons as too fallen to become believers. Let us go even to the borders of Tyre and Sidon, though the land be under a curse, for even there we shall discover some elect one, ordained to be a jewel for the Redeemer's crown. Our heavenly Father has children everywhere.

In spiritual things it is found that the best plants often grow in the most barren soil. Solomon spake of trees, and discoursed concerning the hyssop on the wall and the cedar in Lebanon. So is it in the natural world, the great trees are found on great mountains and the minor plants in places adapted for their tiny roots; but it is not so among the plants of the Lord's right hand planting, for there we have seen the cedar grow upon the wall—great saints in places where it was apparently impossible for them to exist; and we have seen hyssops

growing upon Lebanon—a questionable, insignificant piety, where there have been innumerable advantages. The Lord is able to make strong faith exist with little knowledge, little present enjoyment and little encouragement; and strong faith in such conditions triumphs and conquers, and doubly glorifies the grace of God. Such was this Canaanitish woman, a cedar growing where soil was scant enough. She was a woman of amazing faith, though she could have heard but little of him in whom she believed, and perhaps had never seen his person at all until the day when she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, help me!"

Our Lord had a very quick eye for spying faith. If the jewel was lying in the mire his eye caught its glitter, if there was a choice ear of wheat among the thorns he failed not to perceive it. Faith has a strong attraction for the Lord Jesus; at the sight of it "the king is held in the galleries" and cries "thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck." The Lord Jesus was charmed with the fair jewel of this woman's faith, and watching it and delighting in it he resolved to turn it round and set it in other lights, that the various facets of this priceless diamond might each one flash its brilliance and delight his soul. Therefore he tried her faith by his silence, and by his discouraging replies, that he might see its strength; but he was all the while delighting in it, and secretly sustaining it, and when he had sufficiently tried it, he brought it forth as gold, and set his own royal mark upon it in these memorable words, "O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

I am hopeful this morning that perhaps some poor soul in this place under very discouraging circumstances may nevertheless be led to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with a strong and persevering faith, and though as yet it enjoys no peace, and has seen no gracious answer to prayer, I trust that its struggling faith may be strengthened this morning by the example of the Canaanitish woman.

I gather from the story of her appeal to the Lord Jesus and her success therein, four facts. The first is, *faith's mouth cannot be closed;* the second is, *faith never disputes with God;* thirdly, I perceive that *faith argues mightily;* and fourthly, that *faith wins her suit.*

I. THE MOUTH OF FAITH CAN NEVER BE CLOSED; for if ever the faith of a woman was tried so as to make her cease from prayer, it was that of this daughter of Tyre. She had difficulty after difficulty to encounter, and yet she could not be put off from pleading for her little daughter, because she believed in Jesus as the great Messiah, able to heal all manner of diseases, and she meant to pray to him until he yielded to her importunity, for she was confident that he could chase the demon from her child.

Observe that *the mouth of faith cannot be closed even on account of the closed ear and the closed mouth of Christ.* He answered her never a word. She spoke very piteously, she came and threw herself at his feet, her child's case was very urgent, her motherly heart was very tender, and her cries were very piercing, and yet he answered her never a word: as if he were deaf and dumb, he passed her by; yet was she not staggered; she believed in him, and even he himself could not make her doubt him, let him try silence even if he would. It is hard to believe when prayer seems to be a failure. I would to God that some poor seeker here might

believe that Jesus Christ is able and willing to save, and so fully believe it that his unanswered prayers shall not be able to make him doubt. Even if you should pray in vain by the month together, do not allow a doubt about the Lord Jesus and his power to save to cross your mind. What if you cannot yet grasp the peace which faith must ultimately bring you, what if you have no certainty of forgiveness of your sin, what if no gleams of joy should visit your spirit, yet believe you him, who cannot lie. "Though he slay me," said Job, "yet will I trust in him." That was splendid faith. It would be a great deal for some if they could say, "Though he smite me, yet will I trust him," but Job said, "Though he slay me." If he put on the garb of an executioner, and come out against me as though he would destroy me, yet will I believe him to be full of love: he is good and gracious still, I cannot doubt it, and therefore at his feet I will lie down and look up, expecting grace at his hands. Oh for such faith as this! O soul, if you have it, you are a saved man, as sure as you are alive. If even the Lord's apparent refusal to bless you cannot close your mouth, your faith is of a noble sort, and salvation is yours.

In the next place, *her faith could not be silenced by the conduct of the disciples.* They did not treat her well, but yet perhaps not altogether ill. They were not like their Master, but frequently repulsed those who would come to him. Her noise annoyed them, she kept to them with boundless perseverance, and therefore they said, "Send her away, for she crieth *after us.*" Poor soul, she never cried after *them*, it was after their Master. Sometimes disciples become very important in their own eyes, and think that the pushing and crowding to hear the gospel is caused by the people's eagerness to hear *them*, whereas nobody would care for their poor talk if it were not for the gospel message which they are charged to deliver. Give us any other theme, and the multitude would soon melt away. Though weary of the woman's importunate cries, they acted somewhat kindly towards her, for they were evidently desirous that she should obtain the boon she sought, or else our Lord's reply would not have been appropriate, "I am not sent, save to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." It was not her daughter's healing that they cared for, but they consulted their own comfort, for they were anxious to be rid of her. "Send her away," said they, "for she crieth after us." Still, though they did not treat her as men should treat a woman, as disciples should treat a seeker, as Christians should treat everybody, yet for all that, her mouth was not stopped. Peter, I have no doubt, looked in a very scowling manner, and perhaps even John became a little impatient, for he had a quick temper by nature; Andrew and Philip and the rest of them considered her very impertinent and presumptuous; but she thought of her little daughter at home, and of the horrible miseries to which the demon subjected her, and so she pressed up to the Saviour's feet and said, "Lord, help me." Cold, hard words and unkind, unsympathetic behaviour could not prevent her pleading with him in whom she believed. Ah, poor sinner, perhaps you are saying, "I am longing to be saved, but such and such a good Christian man has dealt very bitterly with me, he has doubted my sincerity and questioned the reality of my repentance, and caused me the deepest sorrow; it seems as if he did not wish me to be saved." Ah, dear friend, this is very

trying, but if you have true faith in the Master you will not mind us disciples, neither the gentlest of us, nor the most crooked of us, but just urge on your suit with your Lord till he deigns to give you an answer of peace.

Her mouth, again, was not closed by exclusive doctrine, which appeared to confine the blessing to a favoured few: the Lord Jesus Christ said, "I am not sent save to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," and though properly understood there is nothing very severe in it, yet the sentence must have fallen on the woman's heart like a talent of lead. "Alas," she might have thought, "then he is not sent to me; vainly do I seek for that which he reserves for the Jews." Now, the doctrine of election, which is assuredly taught in Scripture, ought not to hinder any soul from coming to Christ, for, if properly understood, it would rather encourage than discourage; and yet often to the uninstructed ear the doctrine of the divine choice of a people from before the foundation of world acts with very depressing effect. We have known poor seekers mournfully say, "Perhaps there is no mercy for me; I may be among those for whom no purpose of mercy has been formed." They have been tempted to cease from prayer for fear they should not have been predestinated unto eternal life. Ah, dear soul, if you have the faith of God's elect in you, you will not be kept back by any self-condemning inferences drawn from the secret things of God, but you will believe in that which has been clearly revealed, and you will be assured that this cannot contradict the secret decrees of heaven. What though our Lord was only sent to the house of Israel, yet there is a house of Israel not after the flesh but after the spirit, and therefore the Syrophœnecian woman was included even where she thought she was shut out, and you may also be comprehended within those lines of gracious destiny which now distress you. At any rate, say to yourself, "In the election of grace others are included who were as sinful as I have been, why should not I? Others have been included who were as full of distress as I have been on account of sin, and why should not I be also?" Reasoning thus you will press forward; in hope believing against hope, suffering no plausible deduction from the doctrine of Scripture to prevent your believing in the appointed Redeemer.

The mouth of faith in this case was not even closed by a sense of admitted unworthiness. Christ spoke of dogs: he meant that the Gentiles were to Israel as the dogs: she did not at all dispute it, but yielded the point by saying, "Truth, Lord." She felt she was only worthy to be compared to a dog. I have no doubt her sense of unworthiness was very deep. She did not expect to win the boon she sought for on account of any merit of her own; she depended upon the goodness of Christ's heart, not on the goodness of her cause, and upon the excellence of his power rather than upon the prevalence of her plea; yet conscious as she was that she was only a poor Gentile dog, her prayers were not hindered; she cried, notwithstanding all, "Lord, help me." O sinner, if thou feelest thyself to be the worst sinner out of hell, still pray, believingly pray for mercy. If thy sense of unworthiness be enough to drive thee to self-destruction, yet I beseech thee, out of the depths, out of the dungeon of self-loathing, still cry unto God; for thy salvation rests in no measure or degree upon thyself, or upon anything that thou

art or hast been or canst be. Thou needest to be saved *from* thyself, not *by* thyself. It is thine to be empty that Jesus may fill thee; thine to confess thy filthiness that he may wash thee; thine to be less than nothing that Jesus may be everything to thee. Suffer not the number, blackness, frequency, or heinousness of thy transgressions to silence thy prayers, but though thou be a dog, yea not worthy to be set with the dogs of the Lord's flock, yet open thy mouth in believing prayer.

There was beside this a general tone and spirit in what the Lord Jesus said which tended to depress the woman's hope and restrain her prayer, yet *she was not kept back by the darkest and most depressing influences.* "It is not meet," said the Lord Jesus, "it is not becoming, it is not proper, it is hardly lawful, to take children's bread and throw it to dogs." Perhaps she did not quite see all that he might have meant, but what she did see was enough to pour cold water upon the flame of her hope, yet her faith was not quenched. It was a faith of that immortal kind which nothing can kill; for her mind was made up that whatever Jesus meant, or did not mean, she would not cease to trust him, and urge her suit with him. There are a great many things in and around the gospel which men see as in a haze, and being misunderstood they rather repel than attract seeking souls; but be they what they may we must resolve to come to Jesus at all risks. "If I perish, I perish." Beside the great stumbling-stone of election there are truths and facts which seekers magnify and misconstrue till they see a thousand difficulties. They are troubled about Christian experience, about being born again, about inbred sin, and all sorts of things; in fact, a thousand lions are in the way when the soul attempts to come to Jesus, but he who gives Christ the faith which he deserves says, "I fear none of these things. Lord, help me, and I will still confide in thee. I will approach thee, I will press through obstacles to thee, and throw myself at thy dear feet, knowing that him that cometh to thee thou wilt in no wise cast out."

II. FAITH NEVER DISPUTES WITH THE LORD. Faith worships. You notice how Matthew says, "Then came she and worshipped him." Faith also begs and prays. You observe how Mark says, "She besought him." She cried, "Lord, help me," after having said, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David." Faith pleads, but never disputes, not even against the hardest thing that Jesus says. If faith disputed—I am uttering a solecism—she would not be faith, for that which disputes is unbelief. Faith in God implies agreement with what God says, and consequently it excludes the idea of doubt. Genuine faith believes anything and everything the Lord says whether discouraging or encouraging. She never has a "but" or an "if," or even a "yet" to put in, but she stands to it, "Thou hast said it, Lord, and therefore it is true: thou hast ordained it Lord, and therefore it is right." She never goes beyond that.

Observe in our text that *faith assents to all the Lord says.* She said, "Truth, Lord." What had he said? "You are comparable to a dog!" "Truth, Lord; truth, Lord; so I am." "It would not be meet that the children should be robbed of bread in order to feed dogs." "Truth Lord, it would not be fitting, and I would not have one of thy children deprived of grace for me." "It is not your time

yet," said Jesus ; "the children must *first* be fed ; children at the meal times and dogs after dinner ; this is Israel's time, and the Gentiles may follow after. But not yet." She virtually replies, "I know it, Lord, and agree thereto."

She does not raise a question or dispute the justice of the Lord's dispensing his own grace according to his sovereign good pleasure. She fails not, as some do who cavil at divine sovereignty. It would have proved that she had little or no faith if she had done that. She disputes not as to the Lord's set time and order. Jesus said, "Let the children first be filled," and she does not dispute the time, as many do. who will not have it that now is the accepted time, but are as much for postponing as this woman was for antedating the day of grace. She entered into no argument against its being improper to take the covenant bread from the children and give it to the uncircumcised heathen : she never wished Israel to be robbed for her. Dog as she was she would not have any purpose of God nor any propriety of the divine household shifted and changed for her. She assented to all the Lord's appointments. That is the faith which saves the soul, which agrees with the mind of God, even if it seem adverse to herself, which believes the revealed declarations of God whether they appear to be pleasant or terrible, and assents to God's word whether it be like a balm to its wound or like a sword to cut and slay. If the word of God be true, O man, do not fight against it, but bow before it. It is not the way to a living faith in Jesus Christ, nor to obtain peace with God, to take up arms against anything which God declares. In yielding lies safety. Say "Truth, Lord," and you shall find salvation.

Note, that she not only assented to all that the Lord said, but *she worshipped him in it.* "Truth," she said, "but yet thou art my Lord." "Thou callest me 'dog,' but thou art my Lord for all that : thou accountest me unworthy to receive thy bounties, but thou art my Lord, and I still own thee as such." She is of the mind of Job : "Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil ?" She is willing to take the evil and say, "Whether the Lord gives, or whether he refuses, blessed be his name ; he is my Lord still." Oh, this is grand faith, which has thrown aside the disputatious spirit, and not only assents to the Lord's will, but worships him in it. Let it be what it may, O Lord, even if the truth condemns me, yet still thou art Lord, and I confess thy deity, confess thine excellence, own thy crown rights, and submit myself to thee : do with me what thou wilt."

And, you observe, when she said "Truth, Lord," *she did not go on to suggest that any alteration should be made for her.* "Lord," she said, "thou hast classed me among the dogs :" she does not say, "Put me among the children," but she only asks to be treated as a dog is. "The dogs eat the crumbs," says she. She does not want a purpose altered nor an ordinance changed, nor a decree removed : "Let it be as it is : if it be thy will, Lord, it is my will"; only she spies a gleam of hope, where, if she had not possessed faith, she would have seen only the blackness of despair. May we have such a faith as hers, and never enter into controversy with God.

III. Now I come to an interesting part of our subject, namely, that FAITH ARGUES, though it does not dispute. "Truth, Lord," said she,

"yet the dogs eat the crumbs." This woman's argument was correct, and strictly logical throughout. It was an argument based upon the Lord's own premises, and you know if you are reasoning with a man you cannot do better than take his own statements and argue upon them. She does not proceed to lay down new premises, or dispute the old ones by saying "I am no dog;" but she says, "Yes, I am a dog." She accepts that statement of the Lord, and uses it as a blessed *argumentum ad hominem*, such as was never excelled in this world. She took the words out of his own mouth, and vanquished him with them, even as Jacob overcame the angel. There is so much force in the woman's argument, that I quite despair this morning of being able to set it all forth to you. I would, however, remark that the translators have greatly injured the text by putting in the word "yet," for there is no "yet" in the Greek: it is quite another word. Jesus said, "It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs. "No," said she, "it would not be meet to do this, because the dogs are provided for, for the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table. It would be very improper to give them the children's bread, because they have bread of their own. Truth, Lord, I admit it would be improper to give the dogs the children's bread, because they have already their share when they eat the crumbs which fall from the children's table. That is all they want, and all I desire. I do not ask thee to give me the children's bread, I only ask for the dog's crumbs."

Let us see the force of her reasoning, which will appear in many ways. The first is this. *She argued with Christ from her hopeful position.* "I am a dog," said she, "but, Lord, thou hast come all the way to Sidon; here thou art close on the borders of my country, and therefore I am not like a dog out in the street; I am a dog under the table." Mark tells us that she said, "The dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs." She as good as says, "Lord, thou seest my position: I was a dog in the street, afar off from thee, but now thou hast come and preached in our borders, and I have been privileged to listen to thee. Others have been healed, and thou art in this very house doing deeds of grace while I look on, and therefore, though I am a dog, I am a dog under the table; therefore, Lord, let me have the crumbs." Do you see, dear hearer? You admit that you are a sinner, and a great sinner, but you say, "Lord, I am a sinner that is permitted to hear the gospel, therefore bless it to me. I am a dog, but I am under the table, deal with me as such. When there is a sermon preached for the comfort of thy people, I am there to hear it: whenever the saints gather together, and the precious promises are discussed, and they rejoice therein, I am there, looking up, and wishing that I were among them, but still Lord, since thou hast had the grace to let me be a hearer of the gospel, wilt thou reject me now that I desire to be a receiver of it? To what end and purpose hast thou brought me so near, or rather come so near to me, if after all thou wilt reject me? Dog I am, but still I am a dog under the table. It is a favour to be privileged to be among the children, even if I may only lie at their feet. I pray thee, good Lord, then, since now I am permitted to look up to thee and ask this blessing, do not reject me." To me it seems that this was a strong point with the woman, and that she used it well.

Her next plea was *her encouraging relationship.* "Truth, Lord," she says, "I am a dog, but the dogs eat the crumbs which fall from *their master's* table." See the stress laid there by Matthew: "From their master's table." "I cannot say that thou art my Father, I cannot look up and claim the privilege of a child, but thou art my Master, and masters feed their dogs; they give at least the crumbs to those dogs which own them as their lord." The plea is very like that suggested to the mind of the poor returning prodigal. He thought to say to his father, "Make me as one of thy hired servants": only his faith was far weaker than hers. "Lord, if I do not stand in relation to thee as a child, yet I am thy creature; thou hast made me, and I look up to thee and beseech thee not to let me perish: if I have no other hold upon thee I have at least this, that I ought to have served thee, and therefore I am thy servant though I am a runaway. I do belong to thee at least under the covenant of works if I do not under the covenant of grace, and oh, since I am thy servant, do not utterly reject me. Thou hast some property in me by creation, at any rate; oh, look upon me, and bless me. The dogs eat what falls from their master's table, let me do the same." She spies out a dog's relation to its master, and makes the most of it with blessed ingenuity, which we shall do well to imitate.

Notice next, she pleads *her association with the children.* Here I must tell you that it is a pity that it was not, I suppose, possible for our translators to bring clearly out what is after all the pith of the passage. She was pleading for her *little* daughter; and our Lord said to her, "It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the *little* dogs." The word is a diminutive, and the woman pitched upon it. The word "dogs" could not have served her turn one half as well as that of "little dogs," but she said, "Truth, Lord, yet the little dogs eat of the crumbs." In the East, as a rule, a dog is not allowed indoors; in fact, dogs are there looked upon as foul creatures, and roam about uncared for and half wild. Christianity has raised the dog, and made him man's companion, as it will raise all the brute creation, till the outrages of vivisection, and the cruelties of the vulgar, will be things unheard of except as horrors of a past barbarous age. In the East a dog is far down in the scale of life, a street wanderer, prowling for scanty food, and in temper little better than a reformed wolf. So the adult Easterns do not associate with dogs, having a prejudice against them, but children are not so foolish, and consequently the eastern children associate with the little dogs. The father will not have the dog near him, but his child knows no such folly, and seeks out a little dog to join him in his sports; thus the little dog comes to be under the table, tolerated in the house for the child's sake. The woman appears to me to argue thus—"Thou hast called me and my daughter whelps, little dogs, but then the little dogs are under the children's table; they associate with the children, even as I have been with thy disciples to-day. If I am not one of them, I have been associating with them, and would be glad to be among them." How heartily do I wish that some poor soul would catch at this and say, "Lord, I cannot claim to be one of thy children, but I love to sit among them, for I am never happier than when I am with them. Sometimes they trouble and distress me, as little children

pinch and hurt their little dogs, but oftentimes they caress me, and speak kindly and comfortably to me, and pray for me, and desire my salvation ; so Lord, if I am not a child, yet thou callest me a little dog ; so I am, but give me a little dog's treatment, give me the crumb of mercy which I seek."

His argument goes further, for *the little dog eats the crumbs of the children's bread with the child's full consent.* When a child has its little dog to play with while he is eating, what does the child do ? Why, of course, it gives a little bit to the dog every now and again, and the doggie himself takes great liberties and helps himself as much as he dares. When a little dog is with the children at meal time it is sure to get a crumb from one or other of its playmates ; and none will object to its eating what it can get. So the woman seems to say, " Lord, there are the children, thy disciples ; they do not treat me very well ; little children do not treat little dogs always so kindly as they might ; but still, Lord, they are quite willing that I should have the blessing I am seeking. They have a full portion in thee ; they have thy presence : they have thy word : they sit at thy feet ; they have obtained all sorts of spiritual blessings : I am sure they cannot grudge me so much less a boon ; they are willing that I should have the devil cast out of my daughter, for that blessing compared with what they have is but a crumb, and they are content that I should have it. So Lord, I answer thine argument. Thou sayest it is not meet until the children are filled to give bread to dogs, but, Lord, the children are filled and are quite willing to let me have my portion, they consent to allow me the crumbs ; wilt thou not give them to me ?

I think there was another point of force in her plea : it was this, *the abundance of the provision.* She had a great faith in Christ, and believed big things of him, and therefore she said, " Lord, there is no great strength in thine argument if thou dost intend to prove that I ought not to have the bread for fear there should not be enough for the children, for thou hast so much that even while the children are being fed the dogs may get the crumbs, and there will be enough for the children still." Where it is a poor man's table, and he cannot afford to lose a crumb, dogs should not be allowed ; but when it is a king's table where bread is of small account, and the children are sitting and feeding to the full, the little dogs may be permitted to feed under the table for the mere droppings,—not the bread the master *casts* down, but the crumbs which *fall* by accident are so many that there is enough for the dogs without the children being deprived of a mouthful. " No, Lord," said she, " I would not have thee take away the bread from thine own children, God forbid that such a deed should be done for me ; but there is enough for thy children in thine overflowing love and mercy, and still enough for me, for all I ask is but a crumb compared with what thou art daily bestowing upon others."

Now, here is the last point in which her argument had force. *She looked at things from Christ's point of view.* " If, great Lord," said she, " thou lookest at me as a dog, then behold I humbly take thee at thy word, and plead that if I be a dog to thee then the cure I ask for my daughter is but a crumb for thy great power and goodness to bestow on me." She used a diminutive word too, and said, " A little crumb."

The little dogs eat of the little crumbs which fall from the children's table. What bold faith this was! She valued the mercy she sought beyond all price; she thought it worth ten thousand worlds to her, but yet to the Son of God she knew it to be a mere crumb, so rich is he in power to heal and so full of goodness and blessing. If a man give a crumb to a dog he has a little the less, but if Jesus gives mercy to the greatest of sinners he has none the less, he is just as rich in condescension and mercy and power to forgive as he was before. The woman's argument was most potent. She was as wise as she was earnest, and, best of all, she believed most marvellously.

I shall close this outline of the argument by saying that at bottom the woman was, in reality, arguing according to the eternal purpose of God; for what was the Lord's grand design in giving the bread to the children, or, in other words, sending a divine revelation to Israel? Why, it always was his purpose that through the children the dogs should get the bread; that through Israel the gospel should be handed to the Gentiles. It had always been his plan to bless his own heritage that his way might be known upon earth, his saving health among all nations; and this woman somehow or other, by a divine instinct, fell into the divine method. Though she had not spied out the secret, or at least it is not told us that she did so in so many words, yet there was the innate force of her argument. In other words, it ran thus—"It is through the children that the dogs have to be fed: Lord, I do not ask thee to cease giving the children their bread; nor do I even ask thee to hurry on the children's meal; let them be fed first, but even while they are eating let me have the crumbs which drop from their well-filled hands, and I will be content." There is a brave argument for you, poor coming sinner. I leave it in your hands, and pray the Spirit of God to help you to use it, and if you can turn it to good account you shall prevail with the Lord this day.

IV. Our last and closing head is this: FAITH WINS HER SUIT. This woman's faith first *won a commendation for itself.* Jesus said, "O, woman, great is thy faith." She had not heard of the prophecies concerning Jesus; she was not bred and born and educated in a way in which she was likely to become a believer, and yet did become a believer of the first class. It was marvellous that it should be so, but grace delights in doing wonders. She had not seen the Lord before in her life, she was not like those who had associated with him for many months: and yet, with but one view of him, she gained this great faith. It was astonishing, but the grace of God is always astonishing. Perhaps she had never seen a miracle: all that her faith had to rest upon was that she had heard in her own country that the Messiah of the Jews was come, and she believed that the Man of Nazareth was he, and on this she relied. O brethren, with all our advantages, with the opportunities that we have of knowing the whole life of Christ, and understanding the doctrines of the gospel as they are revealed to us in the New Testament, with many years of observation and experience, our faith ought to be much stronger than it is. Does not this poor woman shame us when we see her with her slender opportunities nevertheless so strong in faith, so that Jesus himself commending her says, "O woman, great is thy faith."

But her faith prevailed further, that it *won a commendation for the mode of its action*, for, according to Mark, Jesus said, "Go thy way; *for this saying* the devil is gone out of thy daughter;" as if he rewarded the saying as well as the faith which suggested it. He was so delighted with the wise, and prudent, and humble yet courageous manner in which she turned his words against himself, that he said, "For this saying the devil is gone out of thy daughter." The Lord who commends faith afterwards commends the fruits and acts of faith. The tree consecrates the fruit. No man's actions can be acceptable with God till he himself is accepted, but the woman having been accepted on her faith, the results of her faith were agreeable to the heart of Jesus.

The woman also *gained her desire:* "The devil is gone out of thy daughter," and he was gone at once. She had only to go home and find her daughter on the bed taking a quiet rest, which she had not done since the demon had possessed her. Our Lord, when he gave her the desire of her heart gave it in a grand manner, he gave her a sort of *carte blanche*, and said, "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt." I do not know that any other person ever had such a word said to him as this woman, "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt." It was as if the Lord of glory surrendered at discretion to the conquering arms of a woman's faith. The Lord grant to you and me in all times of our struggling to be able thus by faith still to conquer, and we cannot imagine how great will be the spoil which we shall divide when the Lord shall say, "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

The close of all is this: this woman is a lesson to all outsiders, to you who think yourselves beyond the pale of hope, to you who were not brought up to attend the house of God, who perhaps have been negligent of all religion for almost all your lifetime. This poor woman is a Sidonian; she comes of a race that had been condemned to die many centuries before, one of the accursed seed of Canaan, and yet for all that she became great in the kingdom of heaven because she believed, and there is no reason why those who are reckoned to be quite outside the church of God should not be in the very centre of it, and be the most burning and shining lights of the whole. O you poor outcasts and far off ones, take heart and comfort, and come to Jesus Christ and trust yourselves in his hands.

This woman is next of all an example to those who think they have been repulsed in their endeavours after salvation. Have you been praying, and have you not succeeded? Have you sought the Lord, and do you seem to be more unhappy than ever? Have you made attempts at reformation and amendment, and believed that you made them in the divine strength, and have they failed? Yet trust in him whose blood has not lost its efficacy, whose promise has not lost its truth, and whose arm has not lost its power to save. Cling to the cross, sinner. If the earth sink beneath thee, cling on; if storms should rage, and all the floods be out, and even God himself seem to be against thee, cling to the cross. There is thy hope. Thou canst not perish there.

This is a lesson, next, to every intercessor. This woman was not pleading for herself, she was asking for another. Oh, when you plead for a fellow sinner do not do it in a cold-hearted manner; plead as for

your own soul and your own life. That man will prevail with God as an intercessor who solemnly bears the matter upon his own heart and makes it his own, and with tears entreats an answer of peace.

Lastly, recollect that this mighty woman, this glorious woman, is a lesson to every mother, for she was pleading for her little daughter. Maternal instinct makes the weakest strong, and the most timid brave. Even among poor beasts and birds, how powerful is a mother's love. Why, the poor little robin which would be frightened at the approach of a footstep, will sit upon its nest when the intruder comes near when her little ones are in danger. A mother's love makes her heroic for her child; and so when you are pleading with God plead as a mother's love suggests to you, till the Lord shall say to you also, "O woman, great is thy faith; the devil is gone out of thy daughter; be it unto thee even as thou wilt." I leave that last thought with parents as an encouragement to pray. The Lord stir you up to it, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Matthew xv. 1—31.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—906, 551, 540.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

SALVATION BY WORKS, A CRIMINAL DOCTRINE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 18TH, 1880, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."—Galatians ii. 21.

THE idea of salvation by the merit of our own works is exceedingly *insinuating*. It matters not how often it is refuted, it asserts itself again and again; and when it gains the least foothold it soon makes great advances. Hence Paul, who was determined to show it no quarter, opposed everything which bore its likeness. He was determined not to permit the thin end of the wedge to be introduced into the church, for well he knew that willing hands would soon be driving it home: hence when Peter sided with the Judaizing party, and seemed to favour those who demanded that the Gentiles should be circumcised, our brave apostle withstood him to the face. He fought always for salvation by grace through faith, and contended strenuously against all thought of righteousness by obedience to the precepts of the ceremonial or the moral law. No one could be more explicit than he upon the doctrine that we are not justified or saved by works in any degree, but solely by the grace of God. His trumpet gave forth no uncertain sound, but gave forth the clear note, "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." Grace meant grace with him, and he could not endure any tampering with the matter, or any frittering away of its meaning.

So fascinating is the doctrine of legal righteousness that the only way to deal with it is Paul's way. Stamp it out. Cry war to the knife against it. Never yield to it; but remember the apostle's firmness, and how stoutly he held his ground: "To whom," saith he, "we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour."

The error of salvation by works is exceedingly *plausible*. You will constantly hear it stated as a self-evident truth, and vindicated on account of its supposed practical usefulness, while the gospel doctrine of salvation by faith is railed at and accused of evil consequences. It is affirmed that if we preach salvation by good works we shall encourage virtue; and so it might seem in theory, but history proves by many instances that as a matter of fact where such doctrine

has been preached virtue has become singularly uncommon, and that in proportion as the merit of works has been cried up, morality has gone down. On the other hand, where justification by faith has been preached, conversions have followed, and purity of life has been produced even in the worst of men. Those who lead godly and gracious lives are ready to confess that the cause of their zeal for holiness lies in their faith in Christ Jesus; but where will you meet with a devout and upright man who glories in his own works?

Self-righteousness is *natural to our fallen humanity*. Hence it is the essence of all false religions. Be they what they may, they all agree in seeking salvation by our own deeds. He who worships his idols will torture his body, will fast, will perform long pilgrimages, and do or endure anything in order to merit salvation. The Romish Church holds up continually before the eyes of its votaries the prize to be earned by self-denial, by penance, by prayers, or by sacraments, or by some other performances of man. Go where you may, the natural religion of fallen man is salvation by his own merits. An old divine has well said, every man is born a heretic upon this point, and he naturally gravitates towards this heresy in one form or another. Self-salvation, either by his personal worthiness, or by his repentance, or by his resolves, is a hope ingrained in human nature, and very hard to remove. This foolishness is bound up in the heart of every child, and who shall get it out of him?

This erroneous idea *arises partly from ignorance*, for men are ignorant of the law of God, and of what holiness really is. If they knew that even an evil thought is a breach of the law, and that the law once broken in any point is altogether violated, they would be at once convinced that there can be no righteousness by the law to those who have already offended against it. They are also in great ignorance concerning themselves, for those very persons who talk about self-righteousness are as a rule openly chargeable with fault; and if not, were they to sit down and really look at their own lives, they would soon perceive even in their best works such impurity of motive beforehand, or such pride and self-congratulation afterwards, that they would see the gloss taken off from all their performances, and they would be utterly ashamed of them. Nor is it ignorance alone which leads men to self-righteousness, they are also deceived by *pride*. Man cannot endure to be saved on the footing of mercy; he loves not to plead guilty and throw himself on the favour of the great King; he cannot brook to be treated as a pauper, and blessed as a matter of charity; he desires to have a finger in his own salvation, and claim at least a little credit for it. Proud man will not have heaven itself upon terms of grace; but so long as he can he sets up one plea or another, and holds to his own righteousness as though it were his life. This self-confidence also arises from wicked *unbelief*, for through his self-conceit man will not believe God. Nothing is more plainly revealed in Scripture than this,—that by the works of the law shall no man be justified, yet men in some shape or other stick to the hope of legal righteousness; they will have it that they must prepare for grace, or assist mercy, or in some degree deserve eternal life. They prefer their own flattering prejudices to the declaration of the heart-searching God. The testimony of the Holy Spirit

concerning the deceitfulness of the heart is cast aside, and the declaration of God that there is none that doeth good, no, not one, is altogether denied. Is not this a great evil? Self-righteousness is also much promoted by the almost universal *spirit of trifling* which is now abroad. Only while men trifle with themselves can they entertain the idea of personal merit before God. He who comes to serious thought, and begins to understand the character of God, before whom the heavens are not pure, and the angels are charged with folly,—he, I say, that comes to serious thought and beholds a true vision of God, abhors himself in dust and ashes, and is for ever silenced as to any thought of self-justification. It is because we do not seriously examine our condition that we think ourselves rich and increased in goods. A man may fancy that he is prospering in business, and yet he may be going back in the world. If he does not face his books or take stock, he may be living in a fool's paradise, spending largely when on the verge of bankruptcy. Many think well of themselves because they never think seriously. They do not look below the surface, and hence they are deceived by appearances. The most troublesome business to many men is thought; and the last thing they will do is to weigh their actions, or test their motives, or ponder their ways, to see whether things be right with them. Self-righteousness being supported by ignorance, by pride, by unbelief, and by the natural superficiality of the human mind, is strongly entrenched and cannot readily be driven out of men.

Yet self-righteousness is *evidently evil*, for it makes light of sin. It talks of merit in the case of one who has already transgressed, and boasts of excellence in reference to a fallen and depraved creature. It prattles of little faults, small failures, and slight omissions, and so makes sin to be a venial error which may be readily overlooked. Not so faith in God, for though it recognises pardon, yet that pardon is seen to come in a way which proves sin to be exceeding sinful. On the other hand, the doctrine of salvation by works has not a word of comfort in it for the fallen. It gives to the elder son all that his proud heart can claim, but for the prodigal it has no welcome. The law has no invitation for the sinner, for it knows nothing of mercy. If salvation be by the works of the law, what must become of the guilty, and the fallen, and the abandoned? By what hopes can these be recalled? This unmerciful doctrine bars the door of hope, and hands over the lost ones to the executioner, in order that the proud Pharisee may air his boastful righteousness, and thank God that he is not as other men are.

It is the intense selfishness of this doctrine which condemns it as an evil thing. It naturally exalts self. If a man conceives that he will be saved by his own works he thinks himself somewhat, and glories in the dignity of human nature: when he has been attentive to religious exercises he rubs his hands and feels that he deserves well of his Maker; he goes home to repeat his prayers, and ere he falls asleep he wonders how he can have grown to be so good and so much superior to those around him. When he walks abroad he feels as if he dwelt apart in native excellence, a person much distinguished from "the vulgar herd," a being whom to know is to admire. All the while he considers himself to be very humble, and is often amazed at his own condescension. What is this but a most hateful spirit? God, who sees the heart, loathes it.

He will accept the humble and the contrite, but he puts far from him those who glory in themselves. Indeed, my brethren, what have we to glory in? Is not every boast a lie? What is this self-hood but a peacock feather, fit only for the cap of a fool? May God deliver us from exalting self; and yet we cannot be delivered from so doing if we hold in any degree the doctrine of salvation by our own good works.

At this time I desire to shoot at the very heart of that soul-destroying doctrine, while I show you, in the first place, that *two great crimes are contained in the idea of self-justification.* When I have brought forth that indictment, I shall further endeavour to show that *these two great crimes are committed by many,* and then, thirdly, it will be a delight to assert that *the true believer does not fall into these crimes.* May God, the Holy Spirit, help us while meditating upon this important theme.

I. First, then, TWO GREAT CRIMES ARE CONTAINED IN SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS. These high crimes and misdemeanours are frustrating the grace of God, and making Christ to have died in vain.

The first is *the frustration of the grace of God.* The word here translated "frustrate" means to make void, to reject, to refuse, to regard as needless. Now, *he that hopes to be saved by his own righteousness rejects the grace or free favour of God, regards it as useless, and in that sense frustrates it.* It is clear, first, that if righteousness come by the law, the grace of God is no longer required. If we can be saved by our own merits we need justice, but we certainly do not want mercy. If we can keep the law, and claim to be accepted as a matter of debt, it is plain that we need not turn suppliants, and crave for mercy. Grace is a superfluity where merit can be proved. A man who can go into court with a clear case and a bold countenance asks not for mercy of the judge, and the offer of it would insult him. "Give me justice," he says; "give me my rights"; and he stands up for them as a brave Englishman should do. It is only when a man feels that the law condemns him that he puts in a plea for mercy. Nobody ever dreamed of recommending an innocent man to mercy. I say, then, that the man who believes that by keeping the law, or by practising ceremonies, or by undergoing religious performances, he can make himself acceptable before God, most decidedly puts the grace of God on one side as a superfluous thing as far as he is concerned. Is it not clearly so? And is not this a crimson crime—this frustration of the grace of God?

Next, *he makes the grace of God to be at least a secondary thing,* which is only a lower degree of the same error. Many think that they are to merit as much as they can by their own exertions, and then the grace of God will make up for the rest. The theory seems to be that we are to keep the law as far as we can, and this imperfect obedience is to stand good, as a sort of composition, say a shilling in the pound, or fifteen shillings in the pound, according as man judges of his own excellence; and then what is required over and above our own hard-earned money the grace of God will supply: in short, the plan is every man his own Saviour, and Jesus Christ and his grace make-weights for our deficiencies. Whether men see it or not, this admixture of law and grace is most dishonouring to the salvation of Jesus Christ. It makes the Saviour's work to be incomplete, though on the cross he cried, "It is finished." Yea, it even treats it as being utterly ineffectual, since it

appears to be of no avail till man's works are added to it. According to this notion, we are redeemed as much by our own doings as by the ransom price of Jesus' blood, and man and Christ go shares, both in the work and in the glory. This is an intense form of arrogant treason against the majesty of divine mercy: a capital crime, which will condemn all who continue in it. May God deliver us from thus insulting the throne of grace by bringing a purchase-price in our hand, as if we could deserve such peerless gifts of love.

More than that, he who trusts in himself, his feelings, his works, his prayers, or in anything except the grace of God, *virtually gives up trusting in the grace of God altogether:* for be it known unto you, that God's grace will never share the work with man's merit. As oil will not combine with water, so neither will human merit and heavenly mercy mix together. The apostle saith in Romans xi. 6, "If by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work." You must either have salvation wholly because you deserve it, or wholly because God graciously bestows it though you do not deserve it. You must receive salvation at the Lord's hand either as a debt or as a charity, there can be no mingling of the ideas. That which is a pure donation of favour cannot also be a reward of personal deserving. A combination of the two principles of law and grace is utterly impossible. Trust in our own works in any degree effectually shuts us out from all hope of salvation by grace; and so it frustrates the grace of God.

This is another form of this crime, that when men preach up human doings, sufferings, feelings, or emotions as the ground of salvation, *they take off the sinner from confidence in Christ,* for as long as a man can maintain any hope in himself he will never look to the Redeemer. We may preach for ever and ever, but as long as there remains latent in any one bosom a hope that he can effectually clear himself from sin and win the favour of God by his own works, that man will never accept the proclamation of free pardon through the blood of Christ. We know that we cannot frustrate the grace of God: it will have its way, and the eternal purpose shall be fulfilled; but as the tendency of all teaching which mixes up works with grace is to take men off from believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, its tendency is to frustrate the grace of God, and every act is to be judged by its tendency even if the Lord's divine power prevents its working out its natural result. No man can lay another foundation than that which is laid, but inasmuch as they try to do so they are guilty of despising the foundation of God as much as those builders of the olden time who rejected the stone which God had chosen to be the head of the corner. May the grace of God keep us from such a crime as this, lest the blood of other men's souls should crimson our garments.

This hoping to be saved by our own righteousness *robs God of his glory.* It as good as says, "We want no grace; we need no free favour." It reads of the new covenant which infinite love has made, but by clinging to the old covenant it puts dishonour upon it. In its heart it murmurs, "What need of this covenant of grace? The covenant of works answers every purpose for us." It reads of the great gift of grace in the person of Jesus Christ, and it does despite thereto

by the secret thought that human doings are as good as the life and death of the Son of God. It cries, "We will not have this man to save us." A self-righteous hope casts a slur upon the glory of God, since it is clear that if a man could be saved by his own works, he would naturally have the honour of it; but if a man be saved by the free grace of God, then God is glorified. Woe unto those who teach a doctrine which would pluck the crown royal from the head of our sovereign Lord and disgrace the throne of his glory. God help us to be clear of this rank offence against high heaven.

I grow warm upon such a subject as this, for my indignation rises against that which does dishonour to my Lord, and frustrates his grace. This is a sin so gross that even the heathen cannot commit it. They have never heard of the grace of God, and therefore they cannot put a slight upon it: when they perish it will be with a far lighter doom than those who have been told that God is gracious and ready to pardon, and yet turn on their heel and wickedly boast of innocence, and pretend to be clean in the sight of God. This is a sin which devils cannot commit. With all the obstinacy of their rebellion, they can never reach to this. They have never had the sweet notes of free grace and dying love ringing in their ears, and therefore they have never refused the heavenly invitation. What has never been presented to their acceptance cannot be the object of their rejection. Thus, then, my hearer, if you should fall into this deep ditch you will sink lower than the heathen, lower than Sodom and Gomorrah, and lower than the devil himself. Wake up, I pray, and do not dare to frustrate the grace of God.

The second great crime which self-justification commits is *making Christ to be dead in vain*. This is plain enough. If salvation can be by the works of the law, why did our Lord Jesus die to save us? O, thou bleeding Lamb of God, thine incarnation is a marvel, but thy death upon the accursed tree is such a miracle of mercy as fills all heaven with astonishment. Will any dare to say that thy death, O incarnate God, was a superfluity, a wanton waste of suffering? Do they dare think thee a generous but unwise enthusiast whose death was needless? Can there be any who think thy cross a vain thing? Yes, thousands virtually do this, and, in fact, all do so who make it out that men might have been saved in some other way, or may now be saved by their own willings and doings.

They who say that the death of Christ goes only part of the way, but that man must do something in order to merit eternal life,—these, I say, make this death of Christ to be only partially effective, and, in yet clearer terms, ineffectual in and of itself. If it be even hinted that the blood of Jesus is not price enough till man adds his silver or his gold, then his blood is not our redemption at all, and Christ is no Redeemer! If it be taught that our Lord's bearing of sin for us did not make a perfect atonement, and that it is ineffectual till we either do or suffer something to complete it, then in the supplemental work lies the real virtue, and Christ's work is in itself insufficient. His death cry of "It is finished," must have been all a mistake, if still it is not finished; and if a believer in Christ is not completely saved by what Christ has done, but must do something himself to complete it, then salvation was not finished, and the Saviour's work remains imperfect till we, poor sinners, lend a hand

to make up for his deficiencies. What blasphemy lies in such a supposition! Christ on Calvary made a needless, and a useless offering of himself if any man among you can be saved by the works of the law.

This spirit also rejects the covenant which was sealed with Christ's death. For if we can be saved by the old covenant of works, then the new covenant was not required. In God's wisdom the new covenant was brought in because the first had grown old, and was void by transgression, but if it be not void, then the new covenant is an idle innovation, and the sacrifice of Jesus ratified a foolish transaction. I loathe the words while I pronounce them. No one ever was saved under the covenant of works, nor ever will be, and the new covenant is introduced for that reason; but if there be salvation by the first, then what need was there of the second? Self-righteousness, as far as it can, disannuls the covenant, breaks its seal, and does despite to the blood of Jesus Christ which is the substance, the certificate, and the seal of that covenant. If you hold that a man can be saved by his own good works, you pour contempt upon the testament of love which the death of Jesus has put in force, for there is no need to receive as a legacy of love that which can be earned as the wage of work.

O sirs, this is a sin against each person of the sacred Trinity. It is a sin against the Father. How could he be wise and good, and yet give his only Son to die on yonder tree in anguish, if man's salvation could be wrought by some other means? It is a sin against the Son of God: you dare to say that our redemption price could have been paid somehow else, and that therefore his death was not absolutely needful for the redemption of the world; or if needful, yet not effectual, for it requires something to be added to it before it can effect its purpose. It is a sin against the Holy Ghost, and beware how you sin against him, for such sins are fatal. The Holy Ghost bears witness to the glorious perfection and unconquerable power of the Redeemer's work, and woe to those who reject that witness. He has come into the world on purpose that he may convince men of the sin of not believing in Jesus Christ: and therefore if we think that we can be saved apart from Christ we do despite to the Spirit of his grace.

The doctrine of salvation by works is a sin against all the fallen sons of Adam, for if men cannot be saved except by their own works what hope is left for any transgressor? You shut the gates of mercy on mankind; you condemn the guilty to die without the possibility of remission. You deny all hope of welcome to the returning prodigal, all prospect of Paradise to the dying thief. If heaven be by works, thousands of us will never see its gates. I know that I never shall. You fine fellows may rejoice in your prospects, but what is to become of us? You ruin us all by your boastful scheme.

Nor is this all. It is a sin against the saints, for none of them have any other hope except in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ. Remove the doctrine of the atoning blood, and you have taken all away; our foundation is gone. If you speak thus you offend the whole generation of godly men. I go further: work-mongering is a sin against the perfect ones above. The doctrine of salvation by works would silence the hallelujahs of heaven. Hush, ye choristers, what meaning is there in your song? You are chanting, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us

from our sins in his own blood." But why sing ye so? If salvation be by works, your ascriptions of praise are empty flatteries. You ought to sing, "Unto ourselves who kept our garments clean, to us be glory for ever and ever"; or at least "unto ourselves whose acts made the Redeemer's work effectual be a full share of praise." But a self-lauding note was never heard in heaven, and therefore we feel sure that the doctrine of self-justification is not of God. I charge you, renounce it as the foe of God and man. This proud system is a sin of deepest dye against the Well-beloved. I cannot endure to think of the insult which it puts upon our dying Lord. If you have made Christ to live in vain, that is bad enough; but to represent him as having *died* in vain! What shall be said of this? That Christ came to earth for nothing is a statement most horrible; but that he became obedient to the death of the cross without result is profanity at its worst.

II. I will say no more concerning the nature of these sins, but in the second place proceed to the solemn fact that THESE TWO GREAT CRIMES ARE COMMITTED BY MANY PEOPLE. I am afraid they are committed by some who hear me this day. Let everyone search himself and see if these accursed things be not hidden in his heart, and if they be, let him cry unto God for deliverance from them.

Assuredly these crimes are chargeable on *those who trifle with the gospel.* Here is the greatest discovery that was ever made, the most wonderful piece of knowledge that ever was revealed, and yet you do not think it worth a thought. You come now and then to hear a sermon, but you hear without heart; you read the Scriptures occasionally, but you do not search them as for hid treasure. It is not your first object in life thoroughly to understand and heartily to receive the gospel which God has proclaimed: yet such ought to be the case. What, my friend, does your indifference say that the grace of God is of no great value in your esteem? You do not think it worth the trouble of prayer, of Bible-reading, and attention. The death of Christ is nothing to you—a very beautiful fact, no doubt; you know the story well, but you do not care enough about it to wish to be a partaker in its benefits. His blood may have power to cleanse from sin, but you do not want remission; his death may be the life of men, but you do not long to live by him. To be saved by the atoning blood does not strike you as being half so important as to carry on your business at a profit and acquire a fortune for your family. By thus trifling with these precious things you do, as far as you can, frustrate the grace of God and make Christ to die in vain.

Another set of people who do this are *those who have no sense of guilt.* Perhaps they are naturally amiable, civil, honest, and generous people, and they think that these natural virtues are all that is needed. We have many such, in whom there is much that is lovely, but the one thing needful is lacking. They are not conscious that they ever did anything very wrong, they think themselves certainly as good as others, and in some respects rather better. It is highly probable that you are as good as others, and even better than others, but still do you not see, my dear friend, if I am addressing one such person, that, if you are so good that you are to be saved by your goodness, you put the grace of God out of court, and make it vain? The whole have no need of the physician, only

they that are sick require his skill, and therefore it was needless that Christ should die for such as you, because you, in your own opinion, had done nothing worthy of death. You claim that you have done nothing very bad; and yet there is one thing in which you have grievously transgressed, and I beg you not to be angry when I charge you with it. You are very bad, because you are so proud as to think yourself righteous, though God hath said that there is none righteous, no, not one. You tell your God that he is a liar. His Word accuses you, and his law condemns you; but you will not believe him, and actually boast of having a righteousness of your own. This is high presumption and arrogant pride, and may the Lord purge you from it. Will you lay this to heart, and remember that if you have never been guilty of anything else this is sin enough to make you mourn before the Lord day and night? You have as far as you could by your proud opinion of yourself made void the grace of God, and declared that Christ died in vain. Hide your face for shame, and entreat for mercy for this glaring offence.

Another sort of people may fancy that they shall escape, but we must now come home to them. *Those who despair* will often cry, "I know I cannot be saved except by grace, for I am such a great sinner; but, alas, I am too great a sinner to be saved at all. I am too black for Christ to wash out my sins." Ah, my dear friend, though you know it not, you are making void the grace of God, by denying its power and limiting its might. You doubt the efficacy of the Redeemer's blood, and the power of the Father's grace. What! The grace of God, is not that able to save? Is not the Father of our Lord Jesus able to forgive sin? We joyfully sing,—

> "Who is a pardoning God like thee?
> Or who hath grace so rich and free?"

And you say he cannot forgive you, and this in the teeth of his many promises of mercy. He says, "All manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." You say that this is not true. Thus you frustrate the grace of God, and you make out that Christ died in vain, at least for you, for you say that he cannot cleanse you. Oh say not so: let not thine unbelief give the lie to God. Oh, believe that he is able to save even thee, and freely, at this very moment, to put all thy sin away, and to accept thee in Christ Jesus. Take heed of despondency, for if thou dost not trust him thou wilt make void his grace.

And those, I think, commit this sin in a large measure, *who make a mingle-mangle of the gospel.* I mean this: when we preach the gospel we have only to say, "Sinners, you are guilty; you never can be anything else but guilty in and of yourselves: if that sin of yours be pardoned it must be through an act of sovereign grace, and not because of anything in you, or that can be done by you. Grace must be given to you because Jesus died, and for no other reason; and the way by which you can have that grace is simply by trusting Christ. By faith in Jesus Christ you shall obtain full forgiveness." This is pure

gospel. If the man turns round and enquires, "How am I warranted to believe in Christ?" If I tell him that he is warranted to believe in Christ because he feels a law-work within, or because he has holy desires, I have made a mess of it: I have put something of the man into the question and marred the glory of grace. My answer is, "Man, your right to believe in Christ lies not in what you are or feel, but in God's command to you to believe, and in God's promise which is made to every creature under heaven, that whosoever believeth in Jesus Christ shall be saved." This is our commission, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." If you are a creature, we preach that gospel to you. Trust Christ and you are saved. Not because you are a sensible sinner, or a penitent sinner, or anything else, but simply because God, of his free grace, with no consideration rendered to him on your part, but gratis and for nothing, freely forgives all your debts for the sake of Jesus Christ. Now I have not mangled the gospel; there it is, with nothing of the creature about it but the man's faith, and even that is the Holy Spirit's gift. Those who mingle their "ifs," and "buts," and insist upon it "you must do this, and feel that, before you may accept Christ," frustrate the grace of God in a measure, and do damage to the glorious gospel of the blessed God.

And so, once more, do *those also who apostatise*. Do I speak to any here who were once professors of religion, who once used to offer prayer in the assembly, who once walked as saints, but now have gone back, breaking the Sabbath, forsaking the house of God, and living in sin? You, my friend, say by your course of life,—"I had the grace of God, but I do not care about it: it is worth nothing. I have rejected it, I have given it up: I have made it void: I have gone back to the world." You do as good as say, "I did once trust in Jesus Christ, but he is not worth trusting." You have denied him, you have sold your Lord and Master. I will not now go into the question as to whether you ever were sincere, though I believe you never were, but on your own showing such is your case. Take heed lest these two terrible crimes should rest upon you, that you do frustrate the grace of God, and make Christ to be dead in vain.

III. On my third point I shall carry with me the deep convictions, and the joyful confidences, of all true believers. It is this, that NO TRUE BELIEVER WILL BE GUILTY OF THESE CRIMES. In his very soul he loathes these infamous sins.

First of all, *no believer in Christ can bear to think of the frustrating of the grace of God or the making of it void.* Come, now, honest hearts, I speak to you. Do you trust in grace alone, or do you in some measure rest in yourselves? Do you even in a small degree depend upon your own feelings, your own faithfulness, your own repentance? I know you abhor the very thought. You have not even the shadow of a hope nor the semblance of a confidence in anything you ever were, or ever can be, or ever hope to be. You fling this away as a foul rag full of contagion, which you would hurl out of the universe if you could. I do avow that though I have preached the gospel with all my heart, and glory in it, yet I cast my preachings away as dross and dung if I think of them as a ground of reliance: and though I have brought many souls to Christ, blessed be his name, I never dare for one moment

put the slightest confidence in that fact as to my own salvation, for I know that I, after having preached to others, may yet be a castaway. I cannot rest in a successful ministry, or an edified church, but I repose alone in my Redeemer. What I say of myself I know that each one of you will say for himself. Your almsgivings, your prayers, your tears, your suffering persecution, your gifts to the church, your earnest work in the Sunday-school or elsewhere—did you ever think of putting these side by side with the blood of Christ as your hope? No, you never dreamed of it; I am sure you never did, and the mention of it is utterly loathsome to you: is it not? Grace, grace, grace is your sole hope.

Moreover, you have not only renounced all confidence in works, but you renounce it this day more heartily than ever you did. The older you are, and the more holy you become, the less do you think of trusting in yourself. The more we grow in grace the more we grow in love with grace; the more we search into our hearts, and the more we know of the holy law of God, the deeper is our sense of unworthiness, and consequently the higher is our delight in rich, free, unmerited mercy, the free gift of the royal heart of God. Tell me, does not your heart leap within you when you hear the doctrines of grace? I know there are some who never felt themselves to be sinners, who shift about as if they were sitting on thorns when I am preaching grace and nothing else but grace; but it is not so with you who are resting in Christ. "Oh, no," you say, "ring that bell again, sir! Ring that bell again; there is no music like it. Touch that string again, it is our favourite note." When you get down in spirits and depressed what sort of book do you like to read? Is it not a book about the grace of God? What do you turn to in the Scriptures? Do you not turn to the promises made to the guilty, the ungodly, the sinner, and do you not find that only in the grace of God, and only at the cross foot is there any rest for you? I know it is so. Then you can rise up and say with Paul, "I do not frustrate the grace of God. Some may, if they like, but God forbid that I should ever make it void, for it is all my salvation and all my desire."

The true believer is also free from the second crime: *he does not make Christ to be dead in vain.* No, no, no, he trusts in the death of Christ; he puts his sole and entire reliance upon the great Substitute who loved and lived and died for him. He does not dare to associate with the bleeding sacrifice, his poor bleeding heart, or his prayers, or his sanctification, or anything else. "None but Christ, none but Christ," is his soul's cry. He detests every proposal to mix anything of ceremony or of legal action with the finished work of Jesus Christ. The longer we live, I trust, dear brethren, the more we see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. We are struck with admiration at the wisdom of the way by which a substitute was introduced,—that God might smite sin and yet spare the sinner; we are lost in admiration at the matchless love of God, that he spared not his own Son; we are filled with reverent adoration at the love of Christ, that when he knew the price of pardon was his blood his pity ne'er withdrew. What is more, we not only joy in Christ, but we feel an increasing oneness with him. We did not know it at first, but we know it now, that we were crucified with him, that we were buried with him, that we rose again with him. We are not going to have Moses for a ruler, or Aaron for

a priest, for Jesus is both king and priest to us. Christ is in us, and we are in Christ, and we are complete in him, and nothing can be tolerated as an aid to the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ our Lord. We are one with him, and being one with him we realize more every day that he did not die in vain. His death *has* bought us real life: his death *has* already set us free from the bondage of sin, and *has* even now brought us deliverance from the fear of eternal wrath. His death has bought us life eternal, has bought us sonship and all the blessings that go with it, which the Fatherhood of God takes care to bestow; the death of Christ has shut the gates of hell for us, and opened the gates of heaven; the death of Christ has wrought for us mercies, not visionary or imaginary, but real and true, which this very day we do enjoy, and so we are in no danger of thinking that Christ died in vain.

It is our joy to hold two great principles which I will leave with you, hoping that you will suck marrow and fatness out of them. These are the two principles. The grace of God cannot be frustrated, and Jesus Christ died not in vain. These two principles I think lie at the bottom of all sound doctrine. *The grace of God cannot be frustrated after all.* Its eternal purpose will be fulfilled, its sacrifice and seal shall be effectual: the chosen ones of grace shall be brought to glory. There shall be no failures as to God's plan in any point whatever: at the last when all shall be summed up it shall be seen that grace reigned through righteousness unto eternal life, and the topstone shall be brought out with shoutings of "Grace, grace unto it." And as grace cannot be frustrated, so *Christ did not die in vain.* Some seem to think that there were purposes in Christ's heart which will never be accomplished. We have not so learned Christ. What he died to do shall be done; those he bought he will have; those he redeemed shall be free; there shall be no failure of reward for Christ's wondrous work: he shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied. On these two principles I throw back my soul to rest. Believing in his grace that grace shall never fail me. "My grace is sufficient for thee," saith the Lord, and so shall it be. Believing in Jesus Christ, his death must save me. It cannot be, O Calvary, that thou shouldst fail; O Gethsemane, that thy bloody sweat should be in vain. Through divine grace, resting in our Saviour's precious blood, we must be saved. Joy and rejoice with me, and go your way to tell it out to others. God bless you in so doing, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Gal. i. 11; ii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—178, 647, 554.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

NUMBER 1,500, OR LIFTING UP THE BRAZEN SERPENT.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 19TH, 1879, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived." —Numbers xxi. 9.

THIS discourse when it shall be printed will make fifteen hundred of my sermons which have been published regularly week by week. This is certainly a remarkable fact. I do not know of any instance in modern times in which fifteen hundred sermons have thus followed each other from the press from one person, and have continued to command a large circle of readers. I desire to utter most hearty thanksgivings to God for divine help in thinking out and uttering these sermons,—sermons which have not merely been printed, but have been *read* with eagerness, and have also been translated into foreign tongues; sermons which are publicly read on this very Sabbath day in hundreds of places where a minister cannot be found; sermons which God has blessed to the conversion of multitudes of souls. I may and I must joy and rejoice in this great blessing which I most heartily ascribe to the undeserved favour of the Lord.

I thought the best way in which I could express my thankfulness would be to preach Jesus Christ again, and set him forth in a sermon in which the simple gospel should be made as clear as a child's alphabet. I hope that in closing the list of fifteen hundred discourses the Lord will give me a word which will be blessed more than any which have preceded it, to the conversion of those who hear it or read it. May those who sit in darkness because they do not understand the freeness of salvation and the easy method by which it may be obtained, be brought into the light by discovering the way of peace through believing in Christ Jesus. Forgive this prelude; my thankfulness would not permit me to withhold it.

Concerning our text and the serpent of brass. If you turn to John's gospel you will notice that its commencement contains a sort of orderly list of types taken from Holy Scripture It begins with the creation.

God said, "Let there be light," and John begins by declaring that Jesus, the eternal Word, is "the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." Before he closes his first chapter John has introduced a type supplied by Abel, for when the Baptist saw Jesus coming to him he said, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." Nor is the first chapter finished before we are reminded of Jacob's ladder, for we find our Lord declaring to Nathanael, "Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." By the time we have reached the third chapter we have come as far as Israel in the wilderness, and we read the joyful words, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." We are going to speak of this act of Moses this morning, that we may all of us behold the brazen serpent and find the promise true, "every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon the brazen serpent, shall live." It may be that you who have looked before will derive fresh benefit from looking again, while some who have never turned their eyes in that direction may gaze upon the uplifted Saviour, and this morning be saved from the burning venom of the serpent, that deadly poison of sin which now lurks in their nature, and breeds death to their souls. May the Holy Spirit make the word effectual to that gracious end.

I. I shall invite you to consider the subject first by noticing THE PERSON IN MORTAL PERIL for whom the brazen serpent was made and lifted up. Our text saith, "It came to pass that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived."

Let us notice that the fiery serpents first of all came among the people because *they had despised God's way and God's bread.* "The soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way." It was God's way, he had chosen it for them, and he had chosen it in wisdom and mercy, but they murmured at it. As an old divine says, "It was lonesome and longsome," but still it was God's way, and therefore it ought not to have been loathsome: his pillar of fire and cloud went before them, and his servants Moses and Aaron led them like a flock, and they ought to have followed cheerfully. Every step of their previous journey had been rightly ordered, and they ought to have been quite sure that this compassing of the land of Edom was rightly ordered, too. But, no; they quarrelled with God's way, and wanted to have their own way. This is one of the great standing follies of men; they cannot be content to wait on the Lord and keep his way, but they prefer a will and way of their own.

The people, also, quarrelled with God's food. He gave them the best of the best, for "men did eat angels' food;" but they called the manna by an opprobrious title, which in the Hebrew has a sound of ridicule about it, and even in our translation conveys the idea of contempt. They said "Our soul loatheth this light bread," as if they thought it unsubstantial, and only fitted to puff them out, because it was easy of digestion, and did not breed in them that heat of blood and tendency to disease which a heavier diet would have brought with it. Being discontented with their God they quarrelled with the bread which he set upon their table, though it surpassed any that mortal man has ever

eaten before or since. This is another of man's follies; his heart refuses to feed upon God's word or believe God's truth. He craves for the flesh-meat of carnal reason, the leeks and the garlic of superstitious tradition, and the cucumbers of speculation; he cannot bring his mind down to believe the Word of God, or to accept truth so simple, so fitted to the capacity of a child. Many demand something deeper than the divine, more profound than the infinite, more liberal than free grace. They quarrel with God's way, and with God's bread, and hence there comes among them the fiery serpents of evil lusting, pride, and sin. I may be speaking to some who have up to this moment quarrelled with the precepts and the doctrines of the Lord, and I would affectionately warn them that their disobedience and presumption will lead to sin and misery. Rebels against God are apt to wax worse and worse. The world's fashions and modes of thought lead on to the world's vices and crimes. If we long for the fruits of Egypt we shall soon feel the serpents of Egypt. The natural consequence of turning against God like serpents is to find serpents waylaying our path. If we forsake the Lord in spirit, or in doctrine, temptation will lurk in our path and sin will sting our feet.

I beg you carefully to observe concerning those persons for whom the brazen serpent was specially lifted up that *they had been actually bitten by the serpents*. The Lord sent fiery serpents among them, but it was not the serpents being *among* them that involved the lifting up of a brazen serpent, it was the serpents having actually poisoned them which led to the provision of a remedy. "It shall come to pass that *everyone that is bitten*, when he looketh upon it, shall live." The only people who did look and derive benefit from the wonderful cure uplifted in the midst of the camp, were those who had been stung by the vipers. The common notion is that salvation is for good people, salvation is for those who fight against temptation, salvation is for the spiritually healthy: but how different is God's word. God's medicine is for the sick, and his healing is for the diseased. The grace of God through the atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ is for men who are actually and really guilty. We do not preach a sentimental salvation from fancied guilt, but real and true pardon for actual offences. I care nothing for sham sinners: you who never did anything wrong, you who are so good in yourselves that you are all right—I leave you, for I am sent to preach Christ to those who are full of sin, and worthy of eternal wrath. The serpent of brass was a remedy for those who had been bitten.

What an awful thing it is to be bitten by a serpent! I dare say some of you recollect the case of Gurling, one of the keepers of the reptiles in the Zoological Gardens. It happened in October, 1852, and therefore some of you will remember it. This unhappy man was about to part with a friend who was going to Australia, and according to the wont of many he must needs drink with him. He drank considerable quantities of gin, and though he would probably have been in a great passion if any one had called him drunk, yet reason and common-sense had evidently become overpowered. He went back to his post at the gardens in an excited state. He had some months before seen an exhibition of snake-charming, and this was on his poor muddled brain. He must emulate the Egyptians, and play

with serpents. First he took out of its cage a Morocco venom-snake, put it round his neck, twisted it about, and whirled it round about him. Happily for him it did not arouse itself so as to bite. The assistant-keeper cried out, "For God's sake put back the snake," but the foolish man replied, "I am inspired." Putting back the venom-snake, he exclaimed, "Now for the cobra." This deadly serpent was somewhat torpid with the cold of the previous night, and therefore the rash man placed it in his bosom till it revived, and glided downward till its head appeared below the back of his waistcoat. He took it by the body, about a foot from the head, and then seized it lower down by the other hand, intending to hold it by the tail and swing it round his head. He held it for an instant opposite to his face, and like a flash of lightning the serpent struck him between the eyes. The blood streamed down his face, and he called for help, but his companion fled in horror; and, as he told the jury, he did not know how long he was gone, for he was "in a maze." When assistance arrived Gurling was sitting on a chair, having restored the cobra to its place. He said, "I am a dead man." They put him in a cab, and took him to the hospital. First his speech went, he could only point to his poor throat and moan; then his vision failed him, and lastly his hearing. His pulse gradually sank, and in one hour from the time at which he had been struck he was a corpse. There was only a little mark upon the bridge of his nose, but the poison spread over the body, and he was a dead man. I tell you that story that you may use it as a parable and learn never to play with sin, and also in order to bring vividly before you what it is to be bitten by a serpent. Suppose that Gurling could have been cured by looking at a piece of brass, would it not have been good news for him? There was no remedy for that poor infatuated creature, but there is a remedy for you. For men who have been bitten by the fiery serpents of sin Jesus Christ is lifted up: not for you only who are as yet playing with the serpent, not for you only who have warmed it in your bosom, and felt it creeping over your flesh, but for you who are actually bitten, and are mortally wounded. If any man be bitten so that he has become diseased with sin, and feels the deadly venom in his blood, it is for him that Jesus is set forth to-day. Though he may think himself to be an extreme case, it is for such that sovereign grace provides a remedy.

The bite of the serpent was painful. We are told in the text that these serpents were "fiery" serpents, which may perhaps refer to their colour, but more probably has reference to the burning effects of their venom. It heated and inflamed the blood so that every vein became a boiling river, swollen with anguish. In some men that poison of asps which we call sin has inflamed their minds. They are restless, discontented, and full of fear and anguish. They write their own damnation, they are sure that they are lost, they refuse all tidings of hope. You cannot get them to give a cool and sober hearing to the message of grace. Sin works in them such terror that they give themselves over as dead men. They are in their own apprehension, as David says, "free among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave, whom God remembers no more." It was for men bitten by the fiery serpents that the brazen serpent was lifted up, and it is for men actually envenomed by sin that Jesus is preached. Jesus died for such as are at their wits' end: for

such as cannot think straight, for those who are tumbled up and down in their minds, for those who are condemned already—for such was the Son of man lifted up upon the cross. What a comfortable thing that we are able to tell you this.

The bite of these serpents was, as I have told you, mortal. The Israelites could have no question about that, because in their own presence "much people of Israel died." They saw their own friends die of the snake-bite, and they helped to bury them. They knew why they died, and were sure that it was because the venom of the fiery serpents was in their veins. They were left without an excuse for imagining that they could be bitten and yet live. Now, we know that many have perished as the result of sin. We are not in doubt as to what sin will do, for we are told by the infallible word, that "the wages of sin is death," and, yet again, "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." We know, also, that this death is endless misery, for the Scripture describes the lost as being cast into outer darkness, "where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched." Our Lord Jesus speaks of the condemned going away into everlasting punishment, where there shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. We ought to have no doubt about this, and the most of those who profess to doubt it are those who fear that it will be their own portion, who know that they are going down to eternal woe themselves, and therefore try to shut their eyes to their inevitable doom. Alas, that they should find flatterers in the pulpit who pander to their love of sin by piping to the same tune. We are not of their order. We believe in what the Lord has said in all its solemnity of dread, and, knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men to escape therefrom. But it was for men who had endured the mortal bite, for men upon whose pallid faces death began to set his seal, for men whose veins were burning with the awful poison of the serpent within them—for them it was that God said to Moses, "Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live."

There is no limit set to the stage of poisoning: however far gone, the remedy still had power. If a person had been bitten a moment before, though he only saw a few drops of blood oozing forth, and only felt a little smart, he might look and live, and if he had waited, unhappily waited, even for half an hour, and speech failed him, and the pulse grew feeble, yet if he could but look he would live at once. No bound was set to the virtue of this divinely ordained remedy, or to the freedom of its application to those who needed it. The promise had no qualifying clause,—"It shall come to pass that everyone that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live," and our text tells us that God's promise came to pass in every case, without exception, for we read—"It came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten *any man*, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived." Thus, then, I have described the person who was in mortal peril.

II. Secondly, let us consider THE REMEDY PROVIDED FOR HIM. This was as singular as it was effectual. *It was purely of divine origin*, and it is clear that the invention of it, and the putting of power into it, was entirely of God. Men have prescribed several fomentations, decoctions, and operations for serpent bites: I do not know how far any of

them may be depended upon, but this I know—I would rather not be bitten in order to try any of them, even those that are most in vogue. For the bites of the fiery serpents in the wilderness there was no remedy whatever, except this which God had provided, and at first sight that remedy must have seemed to be a very unlikely one. A simple look to the figure of a serpent on a pole—how unlikely to avail! How and by what means could a cure be wrought through merely looking at twisted brass? It seemed, indeed, to be almost a mockery to bid men look at the very thing which had caused their misery. Shall the bite of a serpent be cured by looking at a serpent? Shall that which brings death also bring life? But herein lay the excellency of the remedy, that it was of divine origin; for when God ordains a cure he is by that very fact bound to put potency into it. He will not devise a failure, nor prescribe a mockery. It should always be enough for us to know that God ordains a way of blessing us, for if he ordains, it must accomplish the promised result. We need not know *how* it will work, it is quite sufficient for us that God's mighty grace is pledged to make it bring forth good to our souls.

This particular remedy of a serpent lifted on a pole was *exceedingly instructive*, though I do not suppose that Israel understood it. We have been taught by our Lord and know the meaning. It was a serpent impaled upon a pole. As you would take a sharp pole and drive it through a serpent's head to kill it, so this brazen serpent was exhibited as killed, and hung up as dead before all eyes. It was the image of a dead snake. Wonder of wonders that our Lord Jesus should condescend to be symbolised by a dead serpent. The instruction to us after reading John's gospel is this: our Lord Jesus Christ, in infinite humiliation, deigned to come into the world, and to be made a curse for us. The brazen serpent had no venom of itself, but it took the form of a fiery serpent. Christ is no sinner, and in him is no sin. But the brazen serpent was in the form of a serpent; and so was Jesus sent forth by God "in the likeness of sinful flesh." He came under the law, and sin was imputed to him, and therefore he came under the wrath and curse of God for our sakes. In Christ Jesus, if you will look at him upon the cross, you will see that sin is slain and hung up as a dead serpent: there too is death put to death, for "he hath abolished death and brought life and immortality to light:" and there also is the curse for ever ended because he has endured it, being "made a curse for us, as it is written, cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." Thus are these serpents hung up upon the cross as a spectacle to all beholders, all slain by our dying Lord. Sin, death, and the curse are as dead serpents now. Oh, what a sight! If you can see it what joy it will give you. Had the Hebrews understood it, that dead serpent, dangling from a pole, would have prophesied to them the glorious sight which this day our faith gazes upon—Jesus slain, and sin, death, and hell slain in him. The remedy, then, to be looked to was exceedingly instructive, and we know the instruction it was intended to convey to us.

Please to recollect that in all the camp of Israel *there was but one remedy* for serpent-bite, and that was the brazen serpent; and there was but one brazen serpent, not two. Israel might not make another. If they had made a second it would have had no effect: there was one, and only one, and that was lifted high in the centre of the camp, that if any

man was bitten by a serpent he might look to it and live. There is one Saviour, and only one. There is none other name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved. All grace is concentrated in Jesus, of whom we read, "It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." Christ's bearing the curse and ending the curse, Christ's being slain by sin and destroying sin, Christ bruised as to his heel by the old serpent, but breaking the serpent's head,—it is Christ alone that we must look to if we would live. O sinner, look to Jesus on the cross, for he is the one remedy for all forms of sin's poisoned wounds.

There was but one healing serpent, and that one was *bright and lustrous.* It was a serpent of brass, and brass is a shining metal. This was newly-made brass, and therefore not dimmed, and whenever the sun shone, there flashed forth a brightness from this brazen serpent. It might have been a serpent of wood or of any other metal, if God had so ordained; but he commanded that it must be of brass, that it might have a brightness about it. What a brightness there is about our Lord Jesus Christ! If we do but exhibit him in his own true metal he is lustrous in the eyes of men. If we will but preach the gospel simply, and never think to adorn it with our philosophical thought, there is enough brightness in Christ to catch a sinner's eye, aye, and it does catch the eyes of thousands. From afar the everlasting gospel gleams in the person of Christ. As the brazen standard reflected the beams of the sun, so Jesus reflects the love of God to sinners, and seeing it they look by faith and live.

Once more, this remedy was *an enduring one.* It was a serpent of brass, and I suppose it remained in the midst of the camp from that day forward. There was no use for it after Israel entered Canaan, but, as long as they were in the wilderness, it was probably exhibited in the centre of the camp, hard by the tabernacle door, upon a lofty standard. Aloft and open to the gaze of all hung this image of a dead snake—the perpetual cure for serpent venom. Had it been made of other materials it might have been broken, or have decayed, but a serpent of brass would last as long as fiery serpents pestered the desert camp. As long as there was a man bitten there was the serpent of brass to heal him. What a comfort is this, that Jesus is still able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. The dying thief beheld the brightness of that serpent of brass as he saw Jesus hanging at his side, and it saved him; and so may you and I look and live, for he is "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

> "Faint my head, and sick my heart,
> Wounded, bruis'd, in every part,
> Satan's fiery sting I feel
> Poison'd with the pride of hell:
> But if at the point to die,
> Upward I direct mine eye,
> Jesus lifted up I see,
> Live by him who died for me."

I hope I do not overlay my subject by these figures. I wish not to do so, but to make it very plain to you. All you that are really guilty, all you who are bitten by the serpent, the sure remedy for you is to look to

Jesus Christ, who took our sin upon himself, and died in the sinner's stead, "being made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Your only remedy lies in Christ, and nowhere else. Look unto him and be ye saved.

III. This brings us, in the third place, to consider THE APPLICATION OF THE REMEDY, or the link between the serpent-bitten man and the brass serpent which was to heal him. What was the link? It was of the most simple kind imaginable. The brazen serpent might have been, if God had so ordered it, carried into the house where the sick man was, but it was not so. It might have been applied to him by rubbing: he might have been expected to repeat a certain form of prayer, or to have a priest present to perform a ceremony, but there was nothing of the kind; he had only to look. It was well that the cure was so simple for the danger was so frequent. Bites of the serpent came in many ways; a man might be gathering sticks, or merely walking along, and be bitten. Even now in the desert serpents are a danger. Mr. Sibree says that on one occasion he saw what he thought to be a round stone, beautifully marked. He put forth his hand to take it up, when to his horror he discovered that it was a coiled-up living serpent. All the day long when fiery serpents were sent among them the Israelites must have been in danger. In their beds and at their meals, in their houses and when they went abroad, they were in danger. These serpents are called by Isaiah "flying serpents," not because they do fly, but because they contract themselves and then suddenly spring up, so as to reach to a considerable height, and a man might be well buskined and yet not be beyond the reach of one of these malignant reptiles. What was a man to do? He had nothing to do but to stand outside his tent door, and look to the place where gleamed afar the brightness of the serpent of brass, and the moment he looked he was healed. He had nothing to do but to look,—no priest was wanted, no holy water, no hocus-pocus, no mass-book, nothing but a look. A Romish bishop said to one of the early Reformers, when he preached salvation by simple faith, "O Mr. Doctor, open that gap to the people and we are undone." And so indeed they are, for the business and trade of priestcraft are ended for ever if men may simply trust Jesus and live. Yet it is even so. Believe in him, ye sinners, for this is the spiritual meaning of looking, and at once your sin is forgiven, and what perhaps is more, its deadly power ceases to operate within your spirit. There is life in a look at Jesus; is not this simple enough?

But please to notice how *very personal* it was. A man could not be cured by anything anybody else could do for him. If he had been bitten by the serpent and had refused to look to the serpent of brass, and had gone to his bed, no physician could help him. A pious mother might kneel down and pray for him, but it would be of no use. Sisters might come in and plead, ministers might be called in to pray that the man might live; but he must die despite their prayers if he did not look. There was only one hope for his life—*he must look to that serpent of brass.* It is just so with you. Some of you have written to me begging me to pray for you: so I have, but it avails nothing unless you yourselves believe in Jesus Christ. There is not beneath the copes of heaven, nor in heaven, any hope for any one of you unless you will

believe in Jesus Christ. Whoever you may be, however much bitten of the serpent, and however near to die, if you will look to the Saviour you shall live; but if you will not do this you must be damned, as surely as you live. At the last great day I must bear witness against you that I have told you this straight out and plainly. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved: he that believeth not shall be damned." There is no help for it; you may do what you will, join what church you please, take the Lord's Supper, be baptized, go through severe penances, or give all your goods to feed the poor, but you are a lost man unless you look to Jesus, for this is the one remedy; and even Jesus Christ himself cannot, will not, save you unless you look to him. There is nothing in his death to save you, there is nothing in his life to save you, unless you will trust him. It has come to this, *you must look*, and look for yourself.

And then, again, it is *very instructive*. This looking, what did it mean? It meant this—self-help must be abandoned, and God must be trusted. The wounded man would say, "I must not sit here and look at my wound, for that will not save me. See there where the serpent struck me, the blood is oozing forth, black with the venom! How it burns and swells! My very heart is failing. But all these reflections will not ease me. I must look away from this to the uplifted serpent of brass." It is idle to look anywhere except to God's one ordained remedy. The Israelites must have understood as much as this, that God requires us to trust him, and to use his means of salvation. We must do as he bids us, and trust in him to work our cure; and if we will not do this we shall die eternally.

This way of curing was intended that they might magnify the love of God, and attribute their healing entirely to divine grace. The brazen serpent was not merely a picture, as I have shown you, of God's putting away sin by spending his wrath upon his Son, but it was a display of divine love. And this I know because Jesus himself said, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up. For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son": plainly saying that the death of Christ upon the cross was an exhibition of God's love to men; and whosoever looks to that grandest display of God's love to man, namely, his giving his only-begotten Son to become a curse for us, shall surely live. Now, when a man was healed by looking at the serpent he could not say that he healed himself; for he only looked, and there is no virtue in a look. A believer never claims merit or honour on account of his faith. Faith is a self-denying grace, and never dares to boast. Where is the great credit of simply believing the truth, and humbly trusting Christ to save you? Faith glorifies God, and so our Lord has chosen it as the means of our salvation. If a priest had come and touched the bitten man he might have ascribed some honour to the priest; but when there was no priest in the case, when there was nothing except looking to that brazen serpent, the man was driven to the conclusion that God's love and power had healed him. I am not saved by anything that I have done, but by what the Lord has done. To that conclusion God will have us all come; we must all confess that if saved it is by his free, rich, sovereign, undeserved grace displayed in the person of his dear Son.

IV. Allow me one moment upon the fourth head, which is THE CURE EFFECTED. We are told in the text that "if a serpent had bitten any man, *when* he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived;" that is to say, *he was healed at once*. He had not to wait five minutes, nor five seconds. Dear hearer, did you ever hear this before? If you have not, it may startle you, but it is true. If you have lived in the blackest sin that is possible up to this very moment, yet if you will now believe in Jesus Christ you shall be saved before the clock ticks another time. It is done like a flash of lightning; pardon is not a work of time. Sanctification needs a life-time, but justification needs no more than a moment. Thou believest, thou livest. Thou dost trust to Christ, thy sins are gone, thou art a saved man the instant thou believest. "Oh," saith one, "that is a wonder." It is a wonder, and will remain a wonder to all eternity. Our Lord's miracles when he was on earth were mostly instantaneous. He touched them and the fevered ones were able to sit up and minister to him. No doctor can cure a fever in that fashion, for there is a resultant weakness left after the heat of the fever is abated. Jesus works perfect cures, and whosoever believeth in him, though he hath only believed one minute, is justified from all his sins. Oh the matchless grace of God!

This remedy healed again and again. Very possibly after a man had been healed he might go back to his work, and be attacked by a second serpent, for there were broods of them about. What had he to do? Why, to look again, and if he was wounded a thousand times he must look a thousand times. You, dear child of God, if you have sin on your conscience, look to Jesus. The healthiest way of living where serpents swarm is never to take your eye off the brazen serpent at all. Ah, ye vipers, ye may bite if ye will; as long as my eye is upon the brazen serpent I defy your fangs and poison-bags, for I have a continual remedy at work within me. Temptation is overcome by the blood of Jesus. "This is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith."

This cure was of universal efficacy to all who used it. There was not one case in all the camp of a man that looked to the serpent of brass and yet died, and there never will be a case of a man that looks to Jesus who remains under condemnation. The believer *must* be saved. Some of the people had to look from a long distance. The pole could not be equally near to everybody, but so long as they could see the serpent it healed those that were afar off as well as those who were nigh. Nor did it matter if their eyes were feeble. All eyes were not alike keen; and some may have had a squint, or a dimness of vision, or only one eye, but if they did but look they lived. Perhaps the man could hardly make out the shape of the serpent as he looked. "Ah," he said to himself, "I cannot discern the coils of the brazen snake, but I can see the shining of the brass;" and he lived. Oh, poor soul, if thou canst not see the whole of Christ nor all his beauties, nor all the riches of his grace, yet if thou canst but see him who was made sin for us thou shalt live. If thou sayest, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief," thy faith will save thee; a little faith will give thee a great Christ, and thou shalt find eternal life in him.

Thus I have tried to describe the cure. Oh that the Lord would work that cure in every sinner here at this moment. I do pray he may.

It is a pleasant thought that if they looked to that brazen serpent by

any kind of light they lived. Many beheld it in the glare of noon, and saw its shining coils, and lived; but I should not wonder that some were bitten at night, and by the moonlight they drew near and looked up and lived. Perhaps it was a dark and stormy night, and not a star was visible. The tempest crashed overhead, and from the murky cloud out flashed the lightning, cleaving the rocks asunder. By the glare of that sudden flame the dying man made out the brazen serpent, and though he saw but for a moment yet he lived. So, sinner, if your soul is wrapped in tempest, and if from out the cloud there comes but one single flash of light, look to Jesus Christ by it and you shall live.

V. I close with this last matter of consideration: here is A LESSON FOR THOSE WHO LOVE THEIR LORD. What ought we to do? We should imitate Moses, whose business it was to set the brazen serpent upon a pole. It is your business and mine to lift up the gospel of Christ Jesus, so that all may see it. All Moses had to do was to hang up the brazen serpent in the sight of all. He did not say, "Aaron, bring your censer, and bring with you a score of priests, and make a perfumed cloud." Nor did he say, "I myself will go forth in my robes as lawgiver, and stand there." No, he had nothing to do that was pompous or ceremonial. he had but to exhibit the brass serpent and leave it naked and open to the gaze of all. He did not say, "Aaron, bring hither a cloth of gold, wrap up the serpent in blue and scarlet and fine linen." Such an act would have been clean contrary to his orders. He was to keep the serpent unveiled. Its power lay in itself, and not in its surroundings. The Lord did not tell him to paint the pole, or to deck it with the colours of the rainbow. Oh, no. Any pole would do. The dying ones did not want to see the pole, they only needed to behold the serpent. I dare say he would make a neat pole, for God's work should be done decently, but still the serpent was the sole thing to look at. This is what we have to do with our Lord. We must preach *him*, teach *him*, and make *him* visible to all. We must not conceal him by our attempts at eloquence and learning. We must have done with the polished lancewood pole of fine speech, and those bits of scarlet and blue, in the form of grand sentences and poetic periods. Everything must be done that Christ may be seen, and nothing must be allowed which hides him. Moses may go home and go to bed when the serpent is once uplifted. All that is wanted is that the brazen serpent should be within view both by day and night. The preacher may hide himself, so that nobody may know who he is, for if he has set forth Christ he is best out of the way.

Now, you teachers, teach your children Jesus. Show them Christ crucified. Keep Christ before them. You young men that try to preach, do not attempt to do it grandly. The true grandeur of preaching is for Christ to be grandly displayed in it. No other grandeur is wanted. Keep self in the background, but set forth Jesus Christ among the people, evidently crucified among them. None but Jesus, none but Jesus. Let him be the sum and substance of all your teaching.

Some of you have looked to the brazen serpent, I know, and you have been healed, but what have you done with the brazen serpent since? You have not come forward to confess your faith and join the church. You have not spoken to any one about his soul. You put the brazen serpent into a chest and hide it away. Is this right? Bring it out, and

set it on a pole. Publish Christ and his salvation. He was never meant to be treated as a curiosity in a museum; he is intended to be exhibited in the highways that those who are sin-bitten may look at him. "But, I have no proper pole," says one. The best sort of pole to exhibit Christ upon is a high one, so that he may be seen the further. Exalt Jesus. Speak well of his name. I do not know any other virtue that there can be in the pole but its height. The more you can speak in your Lord's praise, the higher you can lift him up the better, but for all other styles of speech there is nothing to be said. Do lift Christ up. "Oh," says one, "but I have not a long standard." Then lift him up on such as you have, for there are short people about who will be able to see by your means. I think I told you once of a picture which I saw of the brazen serpent. I want the Sunday-school teachers to listen to this. The artist represented all sorts of people clustering round the pole, and as they looked the horrible snakes dropped off their arms, and they lived. There was such a crowd around the pole that a mother could not get near it. She carried a little babe, which a serpent had bitten. You could see the blue marks of the venom. As she could get no nearer, the mother held her child aloft, and turned its little head that it might gaze with its infant eye upon the brazen serpent and live. Do this with your little children, you Sunday-school teachers. Even while they are yet little, pray that they may look to Jesus Christ and live; for there is no bound set to their age. Old men snake-bitten came hobbling on their crutches. "Eighty years old am I," saith one, "but I have looked to the brazen serpent, and I am healed." Little boys were brought out by their mothers, though as yet they could hardly speak plainly, and they cried in child language, "I look at the great snake and it bless me." All ranks, and sexes, and characters, and dispositions looked and lived. Who will look to Jesus at this good hour? O dear souls, will you have life or no? Will you despise Christ and perish? If so, your blood be on your own skirts. I have told you God's way of salvation, lay hold on it. Look to Jesus at once. May his Spirit gently lead you so to do. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Numbers xxi. 4—9; John iii. 1—18.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—240, 530, 331.

I should be greatly rejoiced if this sermon could be widely distributed. I have requested Messrs. Passmore and Alabaster to republish it in book form. It can be had at one penny a copy, or 6s. per hundred.—C. H. S

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE GREAT ARBITRATION CASE.

A Sermon

BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Neither is there any daysman betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both."
Job ix. 33.

THE patriarch Job, when reasoning with the Lord concerning his great affliction, felt himself to be at a disadvantage and declined the controversy, saying, "He is not a man, as I am, that I should answer him, and we should come together in judgment." Yet feeling that his friends were cruelly mis-stating his case, he still desired to spread it before the Lord, but wished for a mediator, a middleman, to act as umpire and decide the case. In his mournful plight he sighed for an arbitrator who, while dealing justly for God, would at the same time deal kindly with poor flesh and blood, being able to lay his hand upon both. But, dear friends, what Job desired to have, the Lord has provided for us in the person of his own dear Son, Jesus Christ. We cannot say with Job that there is no daysman who can lay his hand upon both, because there is now "one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." In him let us rejoice, if indeed we have an interest in him; and if we have not yet received him, may almighty grace bring us even now to accept him as our advocate and friend.

There is an old quarrel between the thrice holy God and his sinful subjects, the sons of Adam. Man has sinned; he has broken God's law in every part of it, and has wantonly cast off from him the allegiance which was due to his Maker and his King. There is a suit against man, which was formally instituted at Sinai and must be pleaded in the Court of King's Bench, before the Judge of quick and dead. God is the great plaintiff against his sinful creatures who are the defendants. If that suit be carried into court, it must go against the sinner. There is no hope whatever that at the last tremendous day any sinner will be able to stand in judgment if he shall leave the matter of his debts and obligations towards his God unsettled until that dreadful hour. Sinner, it would be well for thee to "agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way," for if thou be once delivered up to the great Judge of all the earth, there is not the slightest hope that thy suit can be decided otherwise than to thine eternal ruin. "Weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth," will be the doom adjudged thee for ever, if thy case as before the living God shall ever come to be tried at

the fiery throne of absolute justice. But the infinite grace of God proposes an arbitration, and I trust there are many here who are not anxious to have their suit carried into court, but are willing that the appointed daysman should stand betwixt them and God, and lay his hand upon both, and propose and carry out a plan of reconciliation. There is hope for thee, thou bankrupt sinner, that thou mayest yet be at peace with God. There is a way by which thy debts may yet be paid; that way is a blessed arbitration in which Jesus Christ shall stand as the daysman.

Let me begin *by describing the essentials of an arbitrator, or daysman;* then let me *take you into the arbitrator's court and show you his proceedings;* and then for a little time, if there be space enough, let us dwell upon *the happy success of our great Daysman.*

I. First of all, let me describe what are THE ESSENTIALS OF AN UMPIRE, AN ARBITRATOR, OR A DAYSMAN.

The first essential is, that *both parties should be agreed to accept him.* Let me come to thee, thou sinner, against whom God has laid his suit, and put the matter to thee. God has accepted Christ Jesus to be his umpire in his dispute. He appointed him to the office, and chose him for it before he laid the foundations of the world. He is God's fellow, equal with the Most High, and can put his hand upon the Eternal Father without fear, because he is dearly beloved of that Father's heart. He is "very God of very God," and is in no respect inferior to "God over all, blessed for ever." But he is also a man like thyself, sinner. He once suffered, hungered, thirsted, and knew the meaning of poverty and pain. Nay, he went farther, he was tempted as thou hast been, and farther still, he suffered the pangs of death, as thou poor mortal man wilt one day have to do. Now, what thinkest thou? God has accepted him; canst thou agree with God in this matter, and agree to take Christ to be thy daysman too? Does foolish enmity possess thee, or does grace reign and lead thee to accept Emmanuel, God with us, as umpire in this great dispute? Let me say to thee that thou wilt never find another so near akin to thee, so tender, so sympathetic, with such bowels of compassion towards thee. Love streamed from his eyes in life, and poured from his wounds in death. He is "the express image" of Jehovah's person, and you know that Jehovah's name is "Love." "God is love," and Christ is love. Sinner, has divine grace brought thee to thy senses? Wilt thou accept Christ now? Art thou willing that he should take this case into his hands and arbitrate between thee and God? for if God accepteth him, and thou accept him too, then he has one of the first qualifications for being a daysman.

But, in the next place, *both parties must be fully agreed to leave the case entirely in the arbitrator's hands.* If the arbitrator does not possess the power of settling the case, then pleading before him is only making an opportunity for wrangling, without any chance of coming to a peaceful settlement. Now God has committed "all power" into the hands of his Son. Jesus Christ is the plenipotentiary of God, and has been invested with full ambassadorial powers. He comes commissioned by his Father, and he can say in all that he does towards sinners, that his Father's heart is with him. If the case be settled by him, the Father is agreed. Now, sinner, does grace move thy heart to do the same?

Wilt thou agree to put thy case into the hands of Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Son of Man? Wilt thou abide by his decision? Wilt thou have it settled according to his judgment, and shall the verdict which he gives stand absolute and fast with thee? If so, then Christ has another essential of an arbitrator; but if not, remember, though he may make peace for others, he will never make peace for thee; for this know, that until the grace of God has made thee willing to trust the case in Jesu's hands, there can be no peace for thee, and thou art wilfully remaining God's enemy by refusing to accept his dear Son.

Further, let us say, that to make a good arbitrator or umpire, *it is essential that he be a fit person.* If the case were between a king and a beggar, it would not seem exactly right that another king should be the arbitrator, nor another beggar; but if there could be found a person who combined the two, who was both prince and beggar, then such a man could be selected by both. Our Lord Jesus Christ precisely meets the case. There is a very great disparity between the plaintiff and the defendant, for how great is the gulf which exists between the eternal God and poor fallen man! How is this to be bridged? Why by none except by one who is God and who at the same time can become man. Now the only being who can do this is Jesus Christ. He can put his hand on thee, stooping down to all thine infirmity and thy sorrow, and he can put his other hand upon the Eternal Majesty, and claim to be co-equal with God and co-eternal with the Father. Dost thou not see, then, his fitness? Surely it were the path of wisdom, sinner, to accept him at once as the arbitrator in the case. See how well he understands it! I should not do to be an arbitrator in legal cases, because, though I should be anxious to do justice, yet I should know nothing of the law of the case. But Christ knows your case, and the law concerning it, because he has lived among men, and has passed through and suffered the penalties of justice. There cannot surely be a better skilled or more judicious daysman than our blessed Redeemer.

Yet there is one more essential of an umpire, and that is, that *he should be a person desirous to bring the case to a happy settlement.* If you appoint a quarrelsome arbitrator, he may delight to "set dogs by the ears;" but if you elect one who is anxious for the good of both, and wishes to make both friends, then he is just the very man, though, to be sure, he would be a man of a thousand, very precious when found, but very hard to discover. Oh that all law-suits could be decided by such men. In the great case which is pending between God and the sinner, the Lord Jesus Christ has a sincere anxiety both for his Father's glory and for the sinner's welfare, and that there should be peace between the two contending parties. It is the life and aim of Jesus Christ to make peace. He delighteth not in the death of sinners, and he knows no joy greater than that of receiving prodigals to his bosom, and of bringing lost sheep back again to the fold. You cannot tell how high the Saviour's bosom swells with an intense desire to make to himself a great name as a peace-maker. Never had warrior such ambition to make war and to win victories therein, as Christ has to end war, and to win thereby the bloodless triumphs of peace. From the heights of heaven he came leaping like a young roe down to the plains of earth. From earth he leaped into the depths of the grave;

then up again at a bound he sprang to earth, and up again to heaven; and still he resteth not, but presseth on in his mighty work to ingather sinners, and to reconcile them unto God; making himself a propitiation for their sins.

Thou seest then, sinner, how the case is. God has evidently chosen the most fitting arbitrator. That arbitrator is willing to undertake the case, and thou mayest well repose all confidence in him; but and if thou shalt live and die without accepting him as thine arbitrator, then, the case going against thee, thou wilt have none to blame but thyself. When the everlasting damages shall be assessed against thee in thy soul and body for ever, thou shalt have to curse only thine own folly for having been the cause of thy ruin. May I ask you to speak candidly? Has the Holy Ghost so turned the natural bent and current of your will, that you have chosen him because he has first chosen you? Do you feel that Christ this day is standing before God for you? He is God's anointed; is he your elected? God's choice pitches upon him, does your choice agree therewith? Remember, where there is no will towards Christ, Christ as yet exercises no saving power. Christ saves no sinner who lives and dies unwilling. He makes unwilling sinners willing before he speaks a word of comfort to them. It is the mark of our election as his people, that we are made willing in the day of God's power. Lay your hope where God has laid your help, namely, on Christ, mighty to save. You cannot have an arbitrator except both sides be agreed. Dost thou say ay, ay, with all my soul I choose him? Then let us proceed.

II. And now I shall want, by your leave, to TAKE YOU INTO THE COURT WHERE THE TRIAL IS GOING ON, AND SHOW YOU THE LEGAL PROCEEDINGS BEFORE THE GREAT DAYSMAN.

"The man, Christ Jesus," who is "God over all, blessed for ever," opens his court *by laying down the principles upon which he intends to deliver judgment*, and those principles I will now try to explain and expound. They are two-fold—first, *strict justice;* and secondly, *fervent love.*

The arbitrator has determined that let the case go as it may *there shall be full justice done*, justice to the very extreme, whether it be for or against the defendant. He intends to take the law in its sternest and severest aspect, and to judge according to its strictest letter. He will not be guilty of partiality on either side. If the law says that the sinner shall die, the arbitrator declares that he will judge that the sinner shall die; and if, on the other hand, the defendant can plead and prove that he is innocent, he intends to adjudge to him the award of innocence, namely ETERNAL LIFE. If the sinner can prove that he has fairly won it, he shall have his due. Either way, whether it be in favour of the plaintiff or of the defendant, the condition of judgment is to be strict justice.

But the arbitrator also says that he will judge according to the second rule, that of *fervent love.* He loves his Father, and therefore he will decide on nothing that may attaint his honour or disgrace his crown. He so loves God, the Eternal One, that he will suffer heaven and earth to pass away sooner than there shall be one blot upon the character of the Most High. On the other hand, he so loves the poor defendant, man, that he will be willing to do anything rather than inflict penalty

upon him unless justice shall absolutely require it. He loves man with so large a love that nothing will delight him more than to decide in his favour, and he will be but too glad if he can be the means of happily establishing peace between the two. How these principles are to meet, will be seen by and by. At present he lays them down very positively. "He that ruleth among men must be just." An arbitraton must be just; or else he is not fit to hold the scales in any suit. Or the other hand, he must be tender; for his name, as God, is love; and his nature as man is gentleness and mercy. Both parties should distinctly consent to these principles. How can they do otherwise? Do they not commend themselves to all of you? Let justice and love unite if they can.

Having thus laid down the principles of judgment, the arbitrator *next calls upon the plaintiff to state his case.* Let us listen while the great Creator speaks: may God give me grace now reverently to state it in his name, as one poor sinner stating God's case against us all. "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward." The Eternal God charges us, and let me confess at once most justly and most truly charges us, with having broken all his commandments—some of them in act, some of them in word, all of them in heart, and thought, and imagination. He charges upon us, that against light and knowledge we have chosen the evil and forsaken the good; that knowing what we were doing we have turned aside from his most righteous law and have gone astray like lost sheep, following the imaginations and devices of our own hearts. The great Plaintiff claims that inasmuch as we are his creatures we ought to have obeyed him, that inasmuch as we owe our very lives to his daily care we ought to have rendered him service instead of disobedience, and to have been his loyal subjects instead of turning traitors to his throne. All this, calmly and dispassionately, according to the great Book of the law, is laid to our charge before the Daysman. No exaggeration of sin is brought against us. It is simply declared of us that the whole head is sick and the whole heart is faint; that there is none that doeth good, no, not one; that we have all gone out of the way, and altogether become unprofitable. This is God's case. He says, "I made this man; curiously was he wrought in the lowest parts of the earth; and all his members bear traces of my singular handiwork. I made him for my honour, and he has not honoured me. I created him for my service, and he has not served me. Twenty, thirty, forty, fifty years I have kept the breath in his nostrils; the bread he has eaten has been the daily portion of my bounty; his garments are the livery of my charity; and all this while he has neither thought of me, his Creator and Preserver, nor done anything in my service. He has served his family, his wife and children, but his Maker he has despised. He has served his country, his neighbours, the borough in which he dwells; but I who made him, I have

had nothing from him. He has been an unprofitable servant unto me." I think I may put the plaintiff's case into your hands. Which of you would keep a horse, and that horse should yield you no obedience? What excuse is it that though I might not use him he would carry another? Nay, the case is worse than this. Not only has man done nothing, but worse than nothing. Which of you would keep a dog, which, instead of fawning upon you, would bark at you—fly at you, and tear you in his rage? Some of us have done this to God; we have perhaps cursed him to his face; we have broken his sabbaths, laughed at his gospel, and persecuted his saints. You would have said of such a dog, let it die. Wherefore should I harbour in my house a dog that treats me thus? Yet, hear, O heavens; and give ear, O earth; God has borne with your ill manners, and he still cries "forbear." He puts the lifted thunder back into the arsenal of his dread artillery. I wish I could state the case as I ought. My lips are but clay; and these words should be like fire in the sinner's soul. When I meditated upon this subject alone, I felt much sympathy with God, that he should have been so ill treated; and whereas some men speak of the flames of hell as too great a punishment for sin, it seems ten thousand marvels that we should not have been thrust down there long ago.

The plaintiff's case having thus been stated *the defendant is called upon by the Daysman for his*; and I think I hear him as he begins. First of all the trembling defendant sinner pleads—"*I confess to the indictment, but I say I could not help it. I have sinned, it is true, but my nature was such that I could not well do otherwise; I must lay all the blame of it to my own heart; my heart was deceitful and my nature was evil.*" The Daysman at once rules that this is no excuse whatever, but an aggravation, for inasmuch as it is conceded that the man's heart itself is enmity against God, this in an admission of yet greater malice and blacker rebellion. It was only alleged against the offender in the first place that he had outwardly offended; but he acknowledges that he does it inwardly, and confesses that his very heart is traitorous against God, and is fully set upon working the King's damage and dishonour. It is determined, therefore, by the Daysman that this excuse will not stand, and he gives a case in point:—a thief is brought up for stealing, and he pleads that his heart was thievish, that he felt a constant inclination to steal, and that therefore he could not help running off with any goods within his reach. The judge very properly answers, "Then I shall give you twice as much penalty as any other man who only fell into the fault by surprise, for according to your own confession, you are a thief through and through; what you have said is not an excuse, but an aggravation."

Then the defendant pleads in the next place that albeit he acknowledges the facts alleged against him, yet *he is no worse than other offenders*, and that there are many in the world who have sinned more grievously than he has done. He says he has been envious, and angry, and worldly, and covetous, and has forgotten God; but then he never was an adulterer, or a thief, or a drunkard, or a blasphemer, and he pleads that his lesser crimes may well be winked at. But the great Daysman at once turns to the Statute Book, and says that as he is about to give his decision by law that plea is not at all tenable, for the law book has it—

"Cursed is every man that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them." The offence of one sinner doth not excuse the offence of another; and the arbitrator declares that he cannot mix up other cases with the case now in hand; that the present offender has on his own confession broken the law, and that as the law book stands that is the only question to be decided, for "the soul that sinneth it shall die," and if the defendent has no better plea to offer, judgment must go against him.

The sinner urges further, that though he has offended, and offended very greatly and grievously, yet *he has done a great many good things.* It is true he did not love God, but he always went to chapel. It is true he did not pray, but still he belonged to a singing-class. It is quite correct that he did not love his neighbour as himself, but he always liked to relieve the poor. But the Daysman, looking the sinner full in the face, tells him that this plea also is bad, for the alleged commission of some acts of loyalty will not make compensation for avowed acts of treason. "Those things," saith he, "ye ought to have done, but not to have left the others undone;" and he tells the sinner, with all kindness and gentleness, that straining at a gnat does not exonerate him for having swallowed a camel; and that having tithed mint, and anise, and cummin, is no justification for having devoured a widow's house. To have forgotten God is in itself a great enormity; to have lived without serving him is a crime of omission so great, that whatever the sinner may have done on the *contra*, stands for nothing at all, since he has even then in that case done only what he ought to have done. You see at once the justice of this decision. If any of you were to say to your grocer, or tailor, when they send in their bills, "Well, now, you ought not to ask for payment of that account, because I did pay you another bill—you ought not to ask me to pay for that suit of clothes, because I did pay you for another suit;" I think the answer would be, "But in paying for what you had before, you only did what you ought to do; but I still have a demand upon you for this." So all the good deeds you have ever done are only debts discharged which were most fully due, (supposing them to be good deeds, which is very questionable) and they leave the great debt still untouched.

The defendant has no end of pleas, for the sinner has a thousand excuses; and finding that nothing else will do, he begins to appeal to the mercy of the plaintiff, and says *that for the future he will do better.* He confesses that he is in debt, but he will run up no more bills at that shop. He acknowledges that he has offended, but he vows he will not do so again. He is quite sure that the future shall be as free from fault as angels are from sin. Though it is true that he just now said his heart was bad, still he feels inclined to think that it is not so very bad after all; he is conceited enough to think that he can in the future keep himself from committing sin; thereby, you see, admitting the worthlessness of his former plea on which he relied so much "Now," he says, "if for life I become a teetotaller, then surely I may be excused for having been a drunkard; suppose now that I am always honest and steady, and never again say one ill word, will not that exonerate me from all my wrong-doings, and for having blasphemed God?" But the Daysman rules, still with kindness and gentleness,

that the greatest imaginable virtue in the future will be no recompense for the sin of the past; for he finds in the lawbook no promise whatever made to that effect: but the statute runs in these words, "He will by no means spare the guilty;" "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."

You would think that the defendant would now be fairly beaten, but he is not: he asks leave to step across the way *to bring in a friend of his.* He is allowed to do so, and comes back with a gentleman dressed in such a queer style, that, if you had not sometimes seen the like in certain Puseyite Churches, you would suppose him to have arrayed himself for the mere purpose of amusing children at a show, where a merry-andrew is the presiding genius. The defendant seems to imagine that if the case be left to this gentleman in the white shirt and ribbons, he will settle it with ease. He has with him a little bottle of water, by which he can turn hearts of stone into flesh, making heirs of wrath into "members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven." He has a certain portion of mystical bread, and magical wine, the reception with which he can work wonderful transformation, producing flesh and blood therefrom at his reverence's will and pleasure. In fact, this gentleman trades and gets his living by the prosecution of magic. He has occult influences streaming from his fingers, which influences he derived originally from a gentleman in lawn; and he now pretends to have ability derived from the apostles, most probably from Judas, by marvellous manipulations—how I cannot tell you, but by a kind of sleight of hand—to settle the case. But the Daysman, with a frown, hurls a thunderbolt from his hand against the impudent impostor, and bids him take himself away, and not again deceive poor sinners with his vain pretensions. He warns the defendant that the priest is an arrant knave, that whatever professions he may make of being a "successor of the apostles," he knows nothing about apostolical doctrine, or else he would not have intruded his sinful, silly self, between men's souls and God. He bids him advise the man to dress himself like a person in his right mind, who was about honest work, and not as a necromancer or priest of Baal, and give himself to preaching the gospel, instead of propagating the superstitious inventions of Rome.

What is the poor defendant to do now? He is fairly beaten this time. He falls down on his knees, and with many tears and lamentations he cries, "I see how the case stands; *I have nothing to plead, but I appeal to the mercy of the plaintiff;* I confess that I have broken his commandments; I acknowledge that I deserve his wrath; but I have heard that he is merciful, and I plead for free and full forgiveness."

And now comes another scene. The plaintiff seeing the sinner on his knees, with his eyes full of tears, makes this reply, "I am willing at all times to deal kindly and according to lovingkindness with all my creatures; but will the arbitrator for a moment suggest that I should damage and ruin my own perfections of truth and holiness; that I should belie my own word; that I should imperil my own throne; that I should make the purity of immaculate justice to be suspected, and should bring down the glory of my unsullied holiness, because this creature has offended me, and now craves for mercy? I cannot, I will not spare the guilty; *he has offended, and he must die!* 'As I live, I

have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but would rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live.' Still, this 'would rather' must not be supreme. I am gracious and would spare the sinner, but I am just, and must not unsay my own words. I swore with an oath, 'The soul that sinneth shall die.' I have laid it down as a matter of firm decree, 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.' This sinner is righteously cursed, and he must inevitably die; and yet I love him. How can I give thee up, Ephraim? how can I make thee as Admah? How can I set thee as Zeboim? And yet, how can I put thee among the children? Would it not be a worse calamity that I should be unjust than that earth should lose its inhabitants? Better all men perish, than that the universe should lose the justice of God as its stay and shield." The arbitrator bows and says, "Even so; justice demands that the offender should die, and I would not have thee unjust."

What more does the arbitrator say? He sits still, and the case is in suspense. There stands the just and holy God, willing to forgive if it can be done without injury to the immutable principles of right. There sits the arbitrator, looking with eyes of love upon the poor, weeping, trembling sinner, and anxious to devise a plan to save him, but conscious that that plan must not infringe upon divine justice; for it were a worse cruelty to injure divine perfections than it were to destroy the whole human race. The arbitrator, therefore, after pausing awhile, puts it thus: "I am anxious that these two should be brought together; I love them both: I cannot, on the one hand, recommend that my Father should stain his honour; I cannot, on the other hand, endure that this sinner should be cast eternally into hell; I will decide the case, and it shall be thus: *I* will pay my Father's justice all it craves; I pledge myself that in the fulness of time *I will suffer in my own proper person all that the weeping, trembling sinner ought to have suffered.* My Father, wilt thou stand to this?" The eternal God accepts the awful sacrifice! What say you, sinner, what say you? Why, methinks you cannot have two opinions. If you are sane—and may God make you sane—you will melt with wonder. You will say, "I could not have thought this! I never called in a daysman with an expectation of this! *I* have sinned, and *he* declares that *he* will suffer; *I* am guilty, and *he* says that *he* will be punished for me!"

Yes, sinner, and he did more than say it, for when the fulness of time came—you know the story. The officers of justice served him with the writ, and he was taken from his knees in the garden of Gethsemane away to the court, and there he was tried and condemned; and you know how his back was scourged till the white bones stood like islands of ivory in the midst of a crimson sea of gore; you know how his head was crowned with thorns, and his cheeks were given to those who plucked off the hair! Can you not see him hounded through the streets of Jerusalem, with the spittle of the brutal soldiery still upon his unwashed face, and his wounds all unstanched and bleeding? Can you not see him as they hurl him down and fasten him to the accursed tree?—then they lift the cross and dash it down into its socket in the earth, dislocating every bone, tearing every nerve and sinew, filling his soul as full of agony as this earth is full of sin, or the depths of the ocean

filled with its floods? You do not know, however, what he suffered within. Hell held carnival within his heart. Every arrow of the infernal pit was discharged at him, and heaven itself forsook him. The thunderbolts of vengeance fell upon him, and his Father hid his face from him till he cried in his agony, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" And so he suffered on, and on, and on, till "It is finished" closed the scene.

Here, then, is the arbitration. Christ himself suffers; and now I have to put the query, "Hast thou accepted Christ?" O dear friend, if thou hast, I know that God the Holy Ghost has made thee accept him; but if thou hast not, what shall I call thee? I will not upbraid thee, but my heart would weep over thee. How canst thou be so mad as to forego a compromise so blessed, an arbitration so divine! Oh! kiss the feet of the Daysman; love him all thy life, that he has decided the case so blessedly.

III. Let us now look at THE DAYSMAN'S SUCCESS.

For every soul who has received Christ, Christ has made a full atonement which God the Father has accepted; and his success in this matter is to be rejoiced in, first of all, because *the suit has been settled conclusively.* We have known cases go to arbitration, and yet the parties have quarrelled afterwards; they have said that the arbitrator did not rule justly, or something of the kind, and so the whole point has been raised again. But O beloved, the case between a saved soul and God is settled once and for ever. There is no more conscience of sin left in the believer; and as for God's Book, there is not a sin recorded there against any soul that has received Christ. I know some of our Arminian brethren rather think that the case is not settled; or they suppose that the case is settled for a time, but that it will one day come up again. Beloved, I thank God that they are mistaken. Christ has not cast his people's sins into the shallows, where they may be washed up again, but he has cast them into the depths of the sea, where they are drowned for ever. Our scape-goat has not carried our sins to the borders of the land, where they may be found again, but he has taken them away into the wilderness where, if they be searched for, they shall not be found. The case is so settled that in eternity you shall never hear of it again except as a case which was gloriously decided.

Again, the case has been settled *on the best principles*, because, you see, neither party can possibly quarrel with the decision. The sinner cannot, for it is all mercy to him: even eternal justice cannot, for it has had its due. If there had been any mitigation of the penalty, we might yet fear that perhaps the suit might come up again; but now that everything has been paid, that cannot be. If my creditor takes from me, by a settlement in the Court of Insolvency, ten shillings in the pound, I know he will not disturb me yet; but I cannot feel quite at ease about the other ten shillings; and if I am ever able, I should like to pay him. But, you see, Christ has not paid ten shillings in the pound, but he has paid every farthing.

> "Justice now demands no more,
> He has paid the dreadful score."

For all the sins of all his people he has made such a full and satisfac-

tory atonement, that divine justice were not divine justice at all if it should ask to be paid twice for the same offence. Christ has suffered the law's fullest and severest penalty, and there is now no fear whatever that the case can ever be revived, by writ of error, or removal into another court, because it has been settled on the eternal and immutable principles of justice.

Again, the case has been so settled, *that both parties are well content.* You never hear a saved soul murmur at the substitution of the Lord Jesus. If ever I get to see his face, I'll fall down before him and kiss the dust beneath his feet. Oh! if ever I see the Saviour who has thus delivered me from ruin; if I have a crown I will cast it at his feet, and never, never wear it; it must, it shall be his. I feel like the good woman who said, that if Christ ever saved her, he should never hear the last of it; and I am sure he never shall, for I will praise him as long as immortality endures, for what he has done for me. I am sure that every saved sinner feels the same. And Jehovah, on the other side, is perfectly content. He is satisfied with his dear Son. "Well done!" he saith to him. He has received him to the throne of glory, and made him to sit at his right hand, because he is perfectly content with the great work which he has accomplished.

But, what is more and more wonderful still, *both parties have gained in the suit.* Did you ever hear of such a law-suit as this before? No, never in the courts of man. The old story of the two oyster-shells, you know, awarded to the plaintiff and defendant, while the oyster is eaten in court, is generally the result; but it is not so in this case, for both the plaintiff and the defendant have won by the arbitration. What has God gained? Why, glory to himself, and such glory as all creation could not give him, such glory as the ruin of sinners, though so well-deserved, could not give him. Hark how

> "Heaven's eternal arches ring
> With shouts of sovereign grace!"

Angels, too, as well as those who have been redeemed, strike their harps, which they have turned afresh to a nobler strain, as they sing, "Worthy is the Lamb, and blessed is the eternal God!" And, as for us, the poor defendants, why, what have we not gained? We were men before; now we are something more than Adam was. We were "a little lower than the angels" before, but now we are "lifted up far above all principalities and powers." We were God's subjects once, but this arbitration has made us his sons. We were at our very best only the possessors of a paradise on earth, but now we are joint-heirs with Christ of a paradise above the skies. Both sides have won, and both sides must therefore be blessedly content with their glorious Daysman.

And, to conclude, through this Daysman *both parties have come to be united in the strongest, closest, dearest, and fondest bond of union.* This law-suit has ended in such a way that the plaintiff and the defendant are friends for life, nay, friends through death, and friends in eternity. How near God is to a pardoned sinner,

> "So near, so very near to God,
> Nearer we cannot be;
> For in the person of his Son,
> We are as near as he."

What a wonderful thing is that union between God and the sinner! We have all been thinking a great deal lately about the Atlantic Cable. It is a very interesting attempt to join two worlds together. That poor cable, you know, has had to be sunk into the depths of the sea, in the hope of establishing a union between the two worlds, and now we are disappointed again. But oh! what an infinitely greater wonder *has been* accomplished. Christ Jesus saw the two worlds divided, and the great Atlantic of human guilt rolled between. He sank down deep into the woes of man till all God's waves and billows had gone over him, that he might be, as it were, the great telegraphic communication between God and the apostate race, between the Most Holy One and poor sinners. Let me say to you, sinner, there was no failure in the laying down of that blessed cable. It went down deep; the end was well secured, and it went down deep into the depths of our sin, and shame, and woe; and on the other side it has gone right up to the eternal throne, and is fastened there eternally fast, by God himself. You may work that telegraph to-day, and you may easily understand the art of working it too. A sigh will work it; a tear will work it. Say, "God be merciful to me a sinner," and along the wire the message will flash, and will reach God before it comes from you. It is swifter far than earthly telegraphs; ay, and there will come an answer back much sooner than you ever dream of, for it is promised—"Before they call I will answer, and while they are yet speaking I will hear." Who ever heard of such a communication as this between man and man; but it really does exist between sinners and God, since Christ has opened up a way from the depths of our sin to the heights of his glory.

This is for you who are at a distance from him, but he has done more for us who are saved, for he has taken us right across the Atlantic of our sin and set us down on the other side; he has taken us out of our sinful state, and put us into the Father's bosom, and there we shall dwell for ever in the heart of God as his own dear children.

I would to God that some might now be led to look to the Saviour, that some would come with weeping and with tears to him, and say,

> "'Jesus lover of my soul,
> Let me to thy bosom fly.'

Take my case, and arbitrate for me; I accept thine atonement; I trust in thy precious blood; only receive me and I will rejoice in thee for ever with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

May the Lord bless you evermore. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON.—Isaiah liii.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE LORD,—THE LIBERATOR.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 14TH, 1862, BY

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"The Lord looseth the prisoners."—Psalm cxlvi. 7.

WHEN preaching last Tuesday in Dover, the mayor of the town very courteously lent the ancient town-hall for the service, and in passing along to reach a private entrance, I noticed a large number of grated windows upon a lower level than the great hall. These belonged to the prison cells where persons committed for offences within the jurisdiction of the borough were confined. It at once struck me as a singular combination, that we should be preaching the gospel of liberty in the upper chamber, while there were prisoners of the law beneath us. Perhaps when we sang praises to God, the prisoners, like those who were in the same jail with Paul and Silas, heard us; but the free word above did not give them liberty, nor did the voice of song loose their bonds. Alas! what a picture is this of many in our congregations. We preach liberty to the captives; we proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord; but how many remain year after year in the bondage of Satan, slaves to sin. We send up our notes of praise right joyously to our Father who is in heaven, but our praises cannot give them joy, for alas! their hearts are unused to gratitude. Some of them are mourning on account of unpardoned sin, and others of them are deploring their blighted hopes, for they have looked for comfort where it is never to be found. Let us breathe a prayer at the commencement of the sermon this morning, "Lord, break the fetters, and set free the captives. Glorify thyself this morning by proving thyself to be Jehovah, who looseth the prisoners."

The little circumstance which I have mentioned, fixed itself in my mind, and in my private meditations it thrust itself upon me. My thoughts ran somewhat in an allegory, until I gave imagination its full rein and bid her bear me at her will. In my day-dream I thought that some angelic warder was leading me along the corridors of this great world-prison, and bidding me look into the various cells where the prisoners were confined, reminding me ever and anon as I looked sorrowful, that "Jehovah looseth the prisoners." What I thought of, I will now tell out to you. The dress of the sermon may be metaphorical; but my only aim is to utter comforting, substantial truth; and may the

Master grant that some of you who have been in these prisons, as I have been, may this day come out of them, and rejoice that the Lord has loosed you.

I. The first cell to which I went, and to which I shall conduct you, is called *the common prison.* In this common prison, innumerable souls are shut up. It were useless to attempt to count them; they are legion; their number is ten thousand times ten thousand. This is the ward of SIN. All the human race have been prisoners here; and those who this day are perfectly at liberty, once wore the heavy chain, and were immured within the black walls of this enormous prison. I stepped into it, and to my surprise, instead of hearing, as I had expected, notes of mourning and lament, I heard loud and repeated bursts of laughter. The mirth was boisterous and obstreporous. The profane were cursing and blaspheming; others were shouting as though they had found great spoil. I looked into the faces of some of the criminals, and saw sparkling gaiety: their aspect was rather that of wedding-guests than prisoners. Walking to and fro, I noticed captives who boasted that they were free, and when I spoke to them of their prison-house, and urged them to escape, they resented my advice, saying, "We were born free, and were never in bondage unto any man." They bade me prove my words; and when I pointed to the irons on their wrists, they laughed at me, and said that these were ornaments which gave forth music as they moved; it was only my dull and sombre mind, they said, which made me talk of clanking fetters and jingling chains. There were men fettered hard and fast to foul and evil vices, and these called themselves free-livers, while others whose very thoughts were bound, for the iron had entered into their soul, with braggart looks, cried out to me, that they were free-thinkers. Truly, I had never seen such bond-slaves in my life before, nor any so fast manacled as these; but ever did I mark as I walked this prison through and through, that the most fettered thought themselves the most free, and those who were in the darkest part of the dungeon, thought they had most light, and those whom I considered to be the most wretched, and the most to be pitied, were the very ones who laughed the most, and raved most madly and boisterously in their mirth. I looked with sorrow but as I looked, I saw a bright spirit touch a prisoner on the shoulder, who thereon withdrew with the shining one. He went out, and I knew, for I had read the text—"The Lord looseth the prisoners," I knew that the prisoner had been loosed from the house of bondage. But I noted that as he went forth his late bond-fellows laughed and pointed with the finger, and called him sniveller, hypocrite, mean pretender, and all ill names, until the prison walls rang and rang again with their mirthful contempt! I watched, and saw the mysterious visitant touch another, and then another, and another, and they disappeared. The common conversation of the prison said that they had gone mad; that they were become slaves, or miserable fanatics, whereas I knew that they were gone to be free for ever; emancipated from every bond. What struck me most was, that the prisoners who were touched with the finger of delivering love were frequently the worst of the whole crew. I marked one who had blasphemed, but the Divine hand touched him, and he went weeping

out of the gate. I saw another who had often scoffed the loudest when he had seen others led away, but he went out as quietly as a lamb. I observed some, whom I thought to be the least depraved of them all. but they were left, and oftentimes the blackest sinners of the whole company were first taken, and I remembered that I had somewhere in an old book read these words—"The publicans and the harlots enter into the kingdom of God before you." As I gazed intently, I saw some of those men who had once been prisoners come back again into the prison—not in the same dress which they had worn before, but arrayed in white robes, looking like new creatures. They began to talk with their fellow-prisoners; and, oh! how sweetly did they speak! They told them there was liberty to be had; that yonder door would open, and that they might escape. They pleaded with their fellow-men, even unto tears. I saw them sit down and talk with them till they wept upon their necks, urging them to escape, pleading as though it were their own life that was at stake. At first I hoped within myself that all the company of prisoners would rise and cry, "Let us be free." But no; the more these men pleaded the harder the others seemed to grow, and, indeed, I found it so when I sought myself to be an ambassador to these slaves of sin. Wherever the finger of the shining one was felt our pleadings easily prevailed; but save and except in those who were thus touched by the heavenly messenger all our exhortations fell upon deaf ears, and we left that den of iniquity crying, "Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Then I was cast into a muse, as I considered what a marvel of mercy it was that I myself should be free; for well do I remember when I spurned every invitation of love; when I hugged my chains, dreamed my prison garb to be a royal robe, and took the meals of the prison, called the pleasures of sin, and relished them as sweet, yea, dainty morsels, fit for princes. How it came to pass that sovereign grace should have set me free I cannot tell; only this I know, I will sing for ever, while I live and when I die, that "The Lord looseth the prisoners." Our gracious God knoweth how to bring us up out from among the captives of sin, set our feet in the way of righteousness and liberty, make us his people, and keep us so for ever. Alas! how many have I now before me who are prisoners in this common prison?

> "Oh! sovereign grace, their hearts subdue;
> May they be freed from bondage too;
> As willing followers of the Lord,
> Brought forth to freedom by his word."

II. I asked the guide where those were led who were released from the common ward. He told me that they were taken away to be free, perfectly free; but that before their complete gaol deliverance it was necessary that they should visit a house of detention which he would show me. He led me thither. It was called *the solitary cell*. I had heard much of the solitary system, and I wished to look inside this cell, supposing that it would be a dreadful place. Over the door was written this word—"PENITENCE," and when I opened it I found it so clean and white, and withal so sweet and full of light, that I said this place was fitter to be a house of prayer than a prison, and my guide told me that

indeed so it was originally intended, and that nothing but that iron door of unbelief which the prisoners would persist in shutting fast made it a prison at all. When once that door was open the place became so dear an oratory, that those who were once prisoners therein were wont to come back to the cell of their own accord, and begged leave to use it, not as a prison, but as a closet for prayer all their lives long. He even told me that one was heard to say when he was dying, that his only regret in dying was, that in heaven there would be no cell of penitence. Here David wrote seven of his sweetest Psalms; Peter also wept bitterly here; and the woman who was a sinner here washed the feet of her Lord. But this time I was regarding it as a prison, and I perceived that the person in the cell did so consider it. I found that every prisoner in this cell must be there alone. He had been accustomed to mix with the crowd, and find his comfort in the belief that he was a Christian because born in a Christian nation; but he learned that he must be saved alone if saved at all. He had been accustomed aforetime to go up to the house of God in company, and thought that going there was enough; but now every sermon seemed to be aimed at him, and every threatening smote his conscience. I remembered to have read a passage in the same old book I quoted just now—"I will pour out upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. And the land shall mourn, every family *apart;* the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart; all the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart." I noticed that the penitent, while thus alone and apart in his cell, sighed and groaned full oft, and now and then mingled with his penitential utterances some words of unbelief. Alas! were it not for these, that heavy door would long ago have been taken from its hinges. 'Twas unbelief that shut the prisoners in, and if unbelief had been removed from this cell I say it had been an oratory for heaven, and not a place for disconsolate mourning and lamentation. As the prisoner wept for the past, he prophecied for the future, and groaned that he should never come out of this confinement, because sin had ruined him utterly, and destroyed his soul eternally. How foolish his fears were all men might see, for as I looked round upon this clean and white cell, I saw that the door had a knocker inside, and that if the man had but the courage to lift it there was a shining one standing ready outside who would open the door at once; yea, more, I perceived that there was a secret spring called *faith*, and if the man could but touch it, though it were but with a trembling finger, it would make the door fly open. Then I noticed that this door had on the lintel and on the two side posts thereof the marks of blood, and any man who looked on that blood, or lifted that knocker, or touched that spring, found the door of unbelief fly open, and he came out from the cell of his solitary penitence to rejoice in the Lord who had put away his sin, and cleansed him

for ever from all iniquity. So I spoke to this penitent, and bade him trust in the blood, and it may be that through my words the Lord afterwards loosed the prisoner; but this I learned, that no words of mine alone could do it, for in this case, even where repentance was mingled with but a little unbelief, 'tis the Lord, the Lord alone, who can loose the prisoners.

III. I passed away from that cell, though I would have been content to linger there, and I halted at another; this, also, had an iron gate of unbelief, as heavy and as ponderous as the former. I heard the warder coming, and when he opened the door for me it grated horribly upon its hinges, and disturbed the silence, for this time I was come into *the silent cell.* The wretch confined here was one who said he *could not pray.* If he could pray he would be free. He was groaning, crying, sighing, weeping because he could not pray. All he could tell me, as his eyeballs rolled in agony, was this—"I would, but cannot, pray; I would plead with God, but I cannot find a word, my guilt has smitten me dumb." Back he went, and refused to speak again, but he kept up a melancholy roaring all the day long. In this place no sound was heard but that of wailing; all was hushed except the dropping of his tears upon the cold stone, and his dreary miserere of sighs and groans. Verily thought I this is a sad and singular case, yet I remember when I was in that cell myself I did not think it strange. I thought that the heavens were brass above me, and that if I cried never so earnestly the Lord would shut out my prayer. I durst not pray, I was too guilty, and when I did dare to pray 'twas hardly prayer, for I had no hope of being heard. "No," I said, "it is presumption; I must not plead with him;" and when at times I would have prayed, I could not; something choked all utterance, and the spirit could only lament, and long, and pant, and sigh to be able to pray. I know that some of you have been in this prison, and while I am talking to you this morning you will remember it, and bless God for deliverance. Perhaps some of you are in it now, and though I say I think your case is very strange, it will not seem so to you. But do you know, there was a little table in this cell, and on the table lay a key of promise, inscribed with choice words. I am sure the key would unlock the prison-door, and if the prisoner had possessed skill to use it; he might have made his escape at once. This was the key, and these were the words thereon—"The Lord looked down from the height of his sanctuary: from heaven did the Lord behold the earth; to hear the groaning of the prisoner; to loose those that are appointed to death." Now, thought I, if this man cannot speak, yet God hears his groans; if he cannot plead, God listens to his sighs, and beholds him all the way from heaven, with this purpose, that he may catch even the faintest whisper of this poor man's broken heart and set him free; for though the soul feels it can neither plead nor pray, yet it has prayed, and it shall prevail. I tried to catch the ear of my poor friend a little while, and I talked to him, though he would not speak with me. I reminded him that the book in his cell contained instances of dumb men whom Jesus had taught to speak, and I told him that Christ was able to make him speak plainly too. I turned to the book of Jonah, and read him these words,—"Out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest me."

I quoted the words of Elias, "Go again seven times." I told him that the Lord needed no fine language, for misery is the best argument for mercy, and our wounds the best mouths to speak to God's ear. Besides, I told him we have an Advocate with the Father who openeth his mouth for the dumb, so that those who cannot speak for themselves have one to speak for them. I told the man that whether he could pray or not he was bidden to look at the blood-marks over his door; that the publican was justified by the blood, though he could only cry "God, be merciful to me, a sinner." I pleaded with him to receive the Lord's own testimony, that the Lord Jesus is "able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him," that he waited to be gracious, and was a God ready to pardon; but after all, I felt that the Lord alone must loose his prisoners. O, gracious God, loose them now!

IV. We had not time to stay long at any one place, so we hastened to a fourth door. The door opened and shut behind me and I stood alone. What did I see? I saw nothing! 'Twas dark, dark as Egypt in her plague! This was the black hole called *the cell of ignorance*. I groped as a blind man gropeth for the wall. I was guided by my ear by sobs and moans to a spot where there knelt a creature in an earnest agony of prayer. I asked him what made his cell so dark. I knew the door was made of unbelief, which surely shuts out all light, but I marvelled why this place should be darker than the rest, only I recollected to have read of some that sat "in darkness, and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron." I asked him if there were no windows to the cell. Yes, there were windows, many windows, so people told him, but they had been stopped up years ago, and he did not know the way to open them. He was fully convinced that they never could afford light *to him*. I felt for one of the ancient lightholes, but it seemed as if, instead of giving light, it emitted darkness; I touched it with my hand and it felt to me to have once been a window such as I had gazed through with delight. He told me it was one of the doctrines of grace which had greatly perplexed him; it was called *Election*. He said he should have had a little light had it not been for that doctrine, but since God had chosen his people, and he felt persuaded that he had not chosen him, he was lost for ever, since if he were not chosen, it was hopeless for him to seek for mercy. I went up to that window and pulled out some handfuls of rags; filthy rotten rags which some enemies of the doctrine had stuffed into the opening; caricatures and misrepresentations of the doctrine maliciously used to injure the glorious truth of divine sovereignty. As I pulled out these rags, light streamed in, and the man smiled as I told him, "It is a mercy for thee that there is such a doctrine as election, for if there were no such doctrine, there would be no hope for thee; salvation must either be by God's will or by man's merit; if it were by man's merit, thou wouldest never be saved, but since it is by God's will, and he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, there is no reason why he should not have mercy on thee, even though thou mayest be the chief of sinners. Meanwhile he bids thee believe in his Son Jesus, and gives thee his divine word for it, that "Him that cometh unto him he will in no wise cast out." The little light thus shed upon the poor man

led him to seek for more, so he pointed to another darkened window which was called—*The Fall*—or *Human Depravity.* The man said, "Oh, there is no hope for me for I am totally depraved, and my nature is exceeding vile; there is no hope for me." I pulled the rags out of this window too, and I said to him, "Do you not see that your ruin fits you for the remedy? It is because you are lost that Christ came to save you. Physicians are for the sick, robes for the naked, cleansing for the filthy, and forgiveness for the guilty." He said but little, but he pointed to another window, which was one I had long looked through and seen my Master's glory by its means; it was the doctrine of *Particular Redemption.* "Ah!" said he, "suppose Christ has not redeemed me with his precious blood! Suppose he has never bought me with his death!" I knocked out some old bricks which had been put in by an unskilful hand, which yet blocked out the light, and I told him that Christ did not offer a mock redemption, but one which did really redeem, for "the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth *us* from all sin." "Ah!" he said, "but suppose I am not one of the 'us!'" I told him that he that believeth and trusteth Christ, is manifestly one of those whom Jesus came to save, for he is saved. I told him that inasmuch as universal redemption manifestly does not redeem all, it was unworthy of his confidence; but a ransom which did redeem all believers, who are the only persons for whom it was presented, was a sure ground to build upon. There were other doctrines like these. I found the man did not understand one of them; that the truth had been misrepresented to him, and he had heard the doctrines of grace falsely stated and caricatured, or else had never heard them at all. He had been led by some blind guide who had led him into the ditch, and now when the windows were opened and the man could see, he saw written over the door, "Believe and live!" and in the new light which he had found he trusted his Lord and Saviour, and walked out free, and marvelled that he had been so long a slave. I marvelled not, but I thought in my heart how accursed are those teachers who hide the light from the eyes of men so that they understand not the way of life. Ignorant souls, who know not the plan of salvation, will have many sorrows, which they might escape by instruction. Study your Bibles well; be diligent in attending upon a free-grace ministry; labour after a clear apprehension of the plan of salvation, and it will often please God that when you come to understand his truth your spirits will receive comfort, for it is by the truth that "the Lord looseth the prisoners."

V. I passed on and came to another chamber. This room, marked number five, was large, and had many persons in it who were trying to walk to and fro, but every man had a chain round his ankle, and a huge cannon-ball fixed to it—a military punishment they said for deserters from the ranks of virtue. This *clog of habit* troubled the prisoner much. I saw some of them trying to file their chains with rusty nails, and others were endeavouring to fret away the iron by dropping tears of penitence thereon; but these poor men made but little progress at their work. The warder told me that this was the chain of *Habit,* and that the ball which dragged behind was the old propensity to lust and sin. I asked him why they did not get the chains knocked off,

and he said they had been trying a long time to be rid of them, but they never could do it in the way they went to work, since the proper way to get rid of the chain of habit was, first of all, to get out of prison; the door of unbelief must be opened, and they must trust in the one great deliverer the Lord Jesus, whose pierced hands could open all prison doors; after that, upon the anvil of grace with the hammer of love, their fetters could be broken off. I stayed awhile, and I saw a drunkard led out of his prison, rejoicing in pardoning grace. He had aforetime laboured to escape from his drunkenness, but some three or four times he broke his pledge, and went back to his old sin. I saw that man trust in the precious blood and he became a Christian, and becoming a Christian he could no more love his cups; at one stroke of the hammer the ball was gone for ever. Another was a swearer; he knew it was wrong to blaspheme the Most High, but he did it still, till he gave his heart to Christ, and then he never blasphemed again, for that foul thing was abhorred. I noticed some, and methinks I am one of them myself, although they had the ball taken away, yet on their hands there were the remains of old chains. Like Paul, in another case, when we rejoice in all things we have to say, "Except these bonds." Once we were chained both hands together; the divine hammer has smitten off the connecting links, but still some one or two are left hanging there. Ah! often has that link made me cry out—"O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!" Though I am free, yet still the iron clings to its hold, and will hang there till I die. "When I would do good evil is present with me." O that old Adam nature, the corrupt flesh, would God we were rid of it! Blessed be the Lord, as the pulse begins to beat high with heaven's glory, the band will burst, and we shall be perfect for ever. There is no way of getting rid of the links of old habits but by leaving the prison of unbelief and coming to Christ, then the evil habits are renounced as a necessary consequence though the temptation will remain. Though sometimes we have to feel a link of the chain, it is a subject of unbounded thankfulness that the link is not fastened to the staple. We may sometimes feel it dragging behind, enough to trip us up, so that we cannot run in the path of obedience as swiftly as we would, but it is not in the staple now. The bird can fly; though there be a remnant of its cord about its foot it mounts up to heaven, singing its song of praise. The Lord must loose prisoners from their evil habits. He *can* do it; a drop of Jesu's blood can eat the iron all away, and the file of his agonies can cut through the chain of long-acquired sins, and make us free. "The Lord looseth the prisoners."

VI. I must take you to another cell. In almost all prisons where they do not want to make vagabonds worse than when they entered, they have hard labour for them. In the prison I went to see in my reverie there was a *hard-labour room*. Those who entered it were mostly very proud people; they held their heads very high, and would not bend; they were birds with fine feathers, and thought themselves quite unfit to be confined, but being in durance vile, they resolved to work their own way out. They believed in the system of human merit, and hoped in due time to purchase their liberty. They had saved up a few

old counterfeit farthings, with which they thought they could by-and-bye set themselves free, though my bright attendant plainly declared their folly and mistake. It was amusing, and yet sad, to see what different works these people were about. Some of them toiled at a tread-wheel; they were going to the stars they said, and there they were, tread, tread, tread, with all their might; but though they had been labouring for years, and were never an inch higher, yet still they were confident that they were mounting to the skies. Others were trying to make garments out of cobwebs; they were turning wheels, and spinning at a great rate, and though it came to nothing they wrought on. They believed they should be free as soon as they had made a perfect garment, and I believe they will. In one place a company laboured to build houses of sand, and when they had built up to some height the foundation always yielded, but they renewed their efforts, for they dreamed that if a substantial edifice were finished they would then be allowed to go free. I saw some of them, strangely enough, endeavouring to make wedding garments out of fig-leaves, by sewing them together, but the fig-leaves were of a sort that were shrivelled every night, so that they had to begin the next morning their hopeless toil. Some, I noticed, were trying to pump water out of a dry well, the veins stood out upon their brows like whipcords while they worked amain without result. As they laboured, like Samson when he was grinding at the mill, I could hear the crack of whips upon their backs. I saw one ten-thonged whip called *the Law*, the terrible Law—each lash being a commandment, and this was laid upon the bare backs and consciences of the prisoners; yet still they kept on work, work, work, and would not turn to the door of grace to find escape. I saw some of them fall down fainting, whereupon their friends strove to bring them water in leaking vessels, called ceremonies; and there were some men called priests, who ran about with cups which had no bottoms in them, which they held up to the lips of these poor fainting wretches to give them comfort. As these men fainted, I thought they would die, but they struggled up again to work. At last they could do no more, and fell down under their burdens utterly broken in spirit; then I saw that every prisoner who at last so fainted as to give up all hope of his own deliverance by merit, was taken up by a shining spirit, and carried out of the prison and made free for ever. Then I thought within myself, 'Surely, surely, these are proud self-righteous persons who will not submit to be saved by grace, 'therefore He brought down their heart with labour; they fell down and there was none to help; then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them out of their distresses.'" I rejoiced and blessed God that there was such a prison-house to bring them to Jesus; yet I mourned that there were so many who still loved this house of bondage and would not escape, though there stood one with his finger always pointing to the words—"By the works of the law shall no flesh living be justified;" and to these other words, "By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." I had seen enough of that prison-house, for I recollect being there myself, and I have some of the scars upon my spirit now. I desire not to go back to it, but as I have received Christ Jesus the Lord so would I walk in Him, knowing that if the Son make me free I shall be free indeed.

VII. We must not leave these corridors till we have peered into all the cells; for we may not come here again. As I passed along, there was another cell, called *The Low Dungeon of Despondency.* I had read of this in the book of Jeremiah—a pit wherein there was no water, of which the prophet said, "He hath led me and brought me into darkness and not into light." I looked down. It was a deep, dark, doleful place; down in it I saw by the gloomy light of the warder's lantern a poor soul in very deep distress, and I bade him speak to me, and tell me his case. He said he had been a great offender, and he knew it; he had been convinced of sin; he had heard the gospel preached, and sometimes he thought it was for him, but at other times he felt sure it was not; there were seasons when his spirit could lay hold of Christ, but there were times when he dared not hope. Now and then, he said, some gleams of light did come; once a week when he had his provision sent down, a little fresh bread and water, he did feel a little encouraged, but by the time the Monday came—for his provision was always sent down on Sunday—he felt himself as low and miserable as ever. I called out to him that there was a ladder up the side of the prison and if he would but climb it, he might escape, but the poor soul could not feel the steps. I reminded him that he need not be where he was, for a divine hand had let down ropes to draw him up, with soft cushions for his armholes; but I seemed as one that mocked him, and I heard some that tormented him bid him call me "liar." These were two villains called Mistrust and Timorous, who were bent upon keeping him here, even though they knew that he was an heir of heaven, and had a right to liberty. Finding myself powerless, I thus learned the more fully that the Lord must loose these prisoners or else they must be prisoners for many a-day; yet it was a great comfort to recollect that no soul ever died in that dungeon if it had really felt its need of Christ, and cried for mercy through his blood. No soul ever utterly perished while it called upon the name of the Lord; it might lie in the hold till it seemed as if the moss would grow on its eye-lids, and the worms eat its mildewed corpse, but it never did perish, for in due time it was brought by simple faith to believe that Christ is "able to save, even to the uttermost," and then they come up, O how quickly, from their low dungeon, and they sing more sweetly than others—"He hath brought me up out of the horrible pit, and out of the miry clay; he hath set my feet upon a rock, and put a new song in my mouth, and established my going."

VIII. Shudder not at the clinging damps, for I must take you to another dungeon deeper than this last; it is called *the inner prison.* Paul and Silas were cast into the inner prison, and their feet made fast in the stocks, yet they sang in their prison; but in this dungeon no singing was ever heard. It is *the hold of despair.* I need not enlarge much in my description. I hope you have never been there; and I pray you never may. Ah! when a spirit once gets into that inner prison, comforts are turned at once into miseries, and the very promises of God appear to be in league for the destruction of the soul. John Bunyan describes old Giant Despair and his crab-tree cudgel better than I can do it. Sorrowful is that ear which has heard the grating of the huge iron door, and full of terror is the heart which has felt the chilly damps of that horrible pit.

Are any of you in that dungeon to-day? Do you say, "I have grieved the Spirit, and he is gone; my day of grace is over; I have sinned against light and knowledge; I am lost?" O man, where are you? I must have you free. What a splendid trophy of grace you will make! My Master loves to find such great sinners as you are, that he may exhibit his power to save. Oh! what a platform for my Lord to rear the standard of his love upon, when he shall have fought with you and overcome you by his love. What a victory this shall be. How will the angels sing unto him that loved the vilest of the vile, and ransomed the despairing one out of the hand of cruel foes. I have more hope of you than I have of others; for when the surgeon enters the hospital after an accident, he always goes to the worse case first. If there be a man who has broken his finger only, "Oh! let him be," say they, "he can wait;" but if there be a poor fellow who is much mangled, "Ah!" says the surgeon, "I must see to this case at once." So is it with you; but *the Lord* must loose you; I cannot. Only this I know, if you would but believe me, there is a key which will fit the lock of your door of unbelief. Come, look over this bunch of keys: "He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him." "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." "He that believeth on him is not condemned." "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." Brother, this inner dungeon can be opened by the Lord Jesus.

"The gates of brass before him burst, the iron fetters yield."

IX. I am getting to the end of this dark story now; but tarry a moment at the grating of *the Devil's Torture Chamber*, for I have been in it; yes, I have been tormented in it, and therefore I tell you no dream; I tarried in it till my soul melted because of agony, and therefore speak what I do know, and not what I have learned by report. There is a chamber in the experience of some men where the temptations of the devil exceed all belief. Read John Bunyan's "Grace abounding," if you would understand what I mean. The devil tempted him, he says, to doubt the existence of God; the truth of Scripture; the manhood of Christ; then his deity; and once, he says, he tempted him to say things which he will never write, lest he should pollute others. Ah! I remember a dark hour with myself when I, who do not remember to have even heard a blasphem in my youth, much less to have uttered one, heard rushing through my soul an infinite number of curses and blasphemies against the Most High God, till I put my hand to my mouth est they should be uttered, and I was cast down, and cried to the merciful God that he would save me from them. Oh! the foul things which the fiend will inject into the spirit; the awful, damnable things, the offspring of his own infernal den, which he will foist upon us as our own thoughts in such hosts, and so quickly the one after the other, that the spirit has hardly time to swallow down its spittle, and though it hates and loathes these things, still it cannot escape from them, for it is in prison. Ah! well, thank God no soul ever perished through such profanities as those, for if we hate them they are none of

ours; if we loathe them it is not our sin, but Satan's, and God will in due time bring us to be free from these horrors. Though the hosts of hell may have ridden over our heads, yet, let us cry "Rejoice not over me O mine enemy, though I fall yet shall I rise again." Use your sword, poor prisoner! You have one. "*It is written*"—"the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God." Give your foe a deadly stab; tell him that "God is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him," and you may yet see him spread his dragon wings and fly away. This, too, is a prison in which unbelief has confined both saint and sinner, and the Lord himself must loose these prisoners.

X. Last of all, there is one dungeon which those confined therein have called *the condemned cell.* I was in it once. In that room the man writes bitter things against himself; he feels absolutely sure that the wrath of God abideth on him; he wonders the stones beneath his feet do not open a grave to swallow him up; he is astonished that the walls of the prison do not compress and crush him into nothingness; he marvels that he has his breath, or that the blood in his veins does not turn into rivers of flame. His spirit is in a dreadful state; he not only feels he shall be lost, but he thinks it is going to happen now. The condemned cell in Newgate, I am told, is just in such a corner that the condemned can hear the putting-up of the scaffold. Well do I remember hearing my scaffold put up, and the sound of the hammer of the law as piece after piece was put together! It appeared as if I heard the noise of the crowd of men and devils who would witness my eternal execution, all of them howling and yelling out their accursed things against my spirit. Then there was a big bell that tolled out the hours, and I thought that very soon the last moment would arrive, and I must mount the fatal scaffold to be cast away for ever. Oh! that condemned cell! Next to Tophet, there can be no state more wretched than that of a man who is brought here! And yet let me remind you that when a man is thoroughly condemned in his own conscience he shall never be condemned. When he is once brought to see condemnation written on everything that he has done, though hell may flame in his face, he shall be led out, but not to execution; led out, but not to perish, "he shall be led forth with joy, and he shall go forth with peace; the mountains and the hills shall break forth before him into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands." As we read in history of one who was met with a pardon just when the rope was round his neck, just so does God deal with poor souls; when they feel the rope about their necks, acknowledge that God's sentence is just, and confess that if they perish they cannot complain, it is then that sovereign mercy steps in and cries, "I have blotted out like a cloud thine iniquities, and like a thick cloud thy sins; thy sins which are many are all forgiven thee."

And now, thou glorious Jehovah, the Liberator, unto thee be praises! All thy redeemed bless thee, and those who are to-day in their dungeons cry unto thee! Stretch out thy bare arm, thou mighty Deliverer! Thou who didst send thy Son Jesus to redeem by blood, send now thy Spirit to set free by power, and this day, even this day, let multitudes rejoice in the liberty wherewith thou makest free; and unto Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Israel's one Redeemer, be glory for ever and ever! Amen.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

SIN LAID ON JESUS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 10TH, 1866, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."—Isaiah liii. 6.

THE verse opens with a confession of sin *common* to all the persons intended in the verse. The whole of the elect people of God seem to me to be here represented; they have all fallen, those of them who have lived to years of responsibility have all actually sinned, and therefore in common chorus they all say from the first who entered heaven to the last who shall enter there, "All we like sheep have gone astray." But the confession while thus hearty and unanimous, is also *special* and particular: "We have turned every one to his own way." There is a peculiar sinfulness about every one of the individuals; all are sinful, but each one with some special aggravation not found in his fellow. It is the mark of genuine repentance that while it naturally associates itself with other penitents, it also feels that it must take up a position of loneliness. "We have turned every one to his own way" is a confession importing that each man had sinned against light peculiar to himself, or sinned with an aggravation which he at least could not perceive in his fellow. This confession being thus general and particular has many other traits of excellence about it of which we cannot just now speak. It is very *unreserved*. You will observe that there is not a single syllable by way of excuse; there is not a word to detract from the force of the confession. It is moreover singularly *thoughtful*, for thoughtless persons do not use a metaphor so appropriate as the text: "All we like sheep have gone astray." Not like the ox which "knoweth its owner," nor even like the ass which "remembers its master's crib," nor even like the swine which if it wandereth all day long cometh back to the trough at night, but "like sheep we have gone astray;" like a creature cared for but not capable of grateful attachment to the hand that cares for it; like a creature wise enough to find the gap in the hedge by which to escape, but so silly as to have no propensity or desire to return to the place from which it had perversely wandered; like sheep habitually, constantly, wilfully, foolishly, without power to return, we have gone astray. I wish that all our confessions of sin showed a like thoughtfulness, for to say that we are "miserable sinners" may be an increase of our sin unless we have really felt it, to use words of general confes-

sion without our soul entering into them may be but a "repentance that needeth to be repented of," an insult and mockery to high Heaven vented in that very place where there ought to have been the greatest possible tenderness and holy fear. I like the confession of the text because it is a giving up of all pleas of self-righteousness. It is the declaration of a body of men who are guilty, consciously guilty; guilty with aggravations, guilty without excuse; and here they all stand with their weapons of rebellion broken in pieces, saying unanimously, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way."

I hear no dolorous wailings attending this confession of sin; for the next sentence makes it almost a song. "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." It is the most grievous sentence of the three; but it is the most charming and the most full of comfort. Strange is it that where misery was concentrated mercy reigned, and where sorrow reached her climax there it is that a weary soul finds sweetest rest. The Saviour bruised is the healing of bruised hearts.

I want now to draw the hearts of all who feel the confession to the blessed doctrine set forth in the text: the Lord hath laid on Christ the iniquity of us all.

We shall take the text first by way of *exposition;* then by way of *application;* and we shall conclude with serious and I hope profitable *contemplation.*

I. First, let us consider the text by way of EXPOSITION.

1. It may be well to give the marginal translation of the text, "Jehovah hath made to meet on him the iniquity of us all." The first thought that demands notice is *the meeting of sin.* Sin I may compare to the rays of some evil sun. Sin was scattered throughout this world as abundantly as light, and Christ is made to suffer the full effect of the baleful rays which stream from the sun of sin. God as it were holds up a burning glass, and concentrates all the scattered rays in a focus upon Christ. That seems to be the thought of the text, "The Lord hath focused upon him the iniquity of us all." That which was scattered abroad everywhere is here brought into terrible concentration; upon the devoted head of our blessed Lord all the sin of his people was made to meet. Before a great storm when the sky is growing black and the wind is beginning to howl, you have seen the clouds hurrying from almost every point of the compass as though the great day of battle were come, and all the dread artillery of God were hurrying to the field. In the centre of the whirlwind and the storm, when the lightnings threaten to set all heaven on a blaze, and the black clouds fold on fold labour to conceal the light of day, you have a very graphic metaphor of the meeting of all sin upon the person of Christ; the sin of the ages past and the sin of the ages to come, the sins of those of the elect who were in heathendom, and of those who were in Jewry; the sin of the young and of the old, sin original and sin actual, all made to meet, all the black clouds concentrated and brought together into one great tempest that it might rush in one tremendous tornado upon the person of the great Redeemer and substitute. As when a thousand streamlets dash down the mountain side in the day of rain, and all meet in one deep swollen lake; that lake the Saviour's heart, those gushing torrents the sins of us all who are here described as making a full confession of our sins. Or to take a metaphor not from nature but from commerce

suppose the debts of a great number of persons to be all gathered up, the scattered bonds and bills that are to be honoured or dishonoured on such and such a day, and all these laid upon one person who undertakes the responsibility of meeting every one of them without a single assistant; such was the condition of the Saviour; the Lord made to meet on him the debts of all his people so that he became responsible for all the obligations of every one of those whom his Father had given him whatsoever their debts might be. Or if these metaphors do not suffice to set forth the meaning, take the text in our own version, "The Lord hath *laid on him* the iniquity of us all;" put upon him as a burden is laid upon a man's back all the burdens of all his people; put upon his head as the high priest of old laid upon the scape-goat all the sin of the beloved ones that he might bear them in his own person. The two translations you see are perfectly consistent; all sins are made to meet, and then having met together and been tied up in one crushing load the whole burden is laid upon him.

2. The second thought is that *sin was made to meet upon the suffering person of the innocent substitute.* I have said "the suffering person" because the connection of the text requires it. "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed." It is in connection with this, and as an explanation of all his grief, that it is added, "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." The Lord Jesus Christ would have been incapable of receiving the sin of all his people as their substitute had he been himself a sinner: but he was, as to his divine nature, worthy to be hymned as "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabaoth;" and, as to his human nature, he was by miraculous conception free from all original sin, and in the holiness of his life he was such that he was the spotless Lamb of God, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, and therefore he was on all accounts capable of standing in the room, place, and stead of sinful men. The doctrine of the text is, that Jesus Christ, who was man of the substance of his mother, and who was, nevertheless, very God of very God, most true and glorious Creator, Preserver, did stand in such a position as to take upon himself the iniquity of all his people, remaining still himself innocent; having no personal sin, being incapable of any, but yet taking the sin of others upon himself—it has been the custom of theologians to say—*by imputation;* but I question whether the use of that word, although correct enough as it is understood by us, may not have lent some colour to the misrepresentations of those who oppose the doctrine of substitution. I will not say that the sins of God's people were imputed to Christ, though I believe they were; but it seems to me that in a way more mysterious than that which imputation would express, the sins of God's people were actually laid upon Jesus Christ; that in the view of God, not only was Christ treated as if he had been guilty, but the very sin itself was, I know not how, but according to the text it was somehow laid upon the head of Christ Jesus: "For he hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Is it not written, "He shall bear," not merely the punishment of their sin, nor the imputation of their sin, but "He shall bear their iniquities"? Our sin is laid on Jesus in even a deeper and truer sense than is expressed by the term imputation. I do not think I can express it,

nor convey the idea that I have in my own mind, but while Jesus never was and never could be a sinner,—God forbid that the blasphemous thought should ever cross our lips or dwell upon our heart!—yet the sin of his people was literally and truly laid upon him.

3. It has been asked, *Was it just that sin should thus be laid upon Christ?* Our reply is fourfold. We believe it was rightly so, first because *it was the act of him who must do right*, for "the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Jehovah, he against whom the offence was committed, and who has ordained that the sin of the people spoken of should be laid upon Christ. To impugn this, then, would be to impugn the justice of Jehovah, and I pray that none of us may have the hardihood to do that. Shall the potsherd venture to strive with the potter? shall the thing formed contend with the Creator of all things? Jehovah did it; and we accept it as being right, caring not what men may think of Jehovah's own deed. Remember, moreover, that *Jesus Christ voluntarily took this sin upon himself.* It was not forced upon him. He was not punished for the sins of others with whom he had no connection and against his will; but He his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, and while bearing it said, "No man taketh my life from me, but I lay it down of myself." It was according to his own eternal agreement made with the Father on our behalf; it was according to his own expressed desire, for he had a baptism to be baptized with, and he was straitened until it was accomplished; and therefore whatever of injustice might be supposed, it is removed by the fact that he who was mainly concerned in it was himself voluntarily placed in such a position. But I would have you remember, beloved, that *there was a relationship between our Lord and his people*, which is too often forgotten, but which rendered it natural that he should bear the sin of his people. Why does the text speak of our sinning like sheep? I think it is because it would call to our recollection that *Christ is our Shepherd.* It is not, my brethren, that Christ took upon himself the sins of strangers. Remember that there always was a union of a most mysterious and intimate kind between those who sinned and the Christ who suffered. What if I say that it is not unjust but according to law that when a woman gets into debt her husband should bear it? And the church of God sinning it was but right that her Husband, who had espoused her unto himself, should become the debtor on her behalf. The Lord Jesus stood in the relationship of a married husband unto his church, and it was not, therefore, a strange thing that he should bear her burdens. It was natural for the next of kin to redeem the inheritance, it was most seemly that Immanuel, the next of kin, should redeem his lost church by his own blood. Recollect that there was a union closer even than the marriage bond, for we are members of his body. You shall not punish this hand of mine without making the sentient nature which dwells in the brain to suffer therewith; and does it seem strange to you that when the inferior members of the body have transgressed the Head should be made to suffer? It seems to me, my brethren, that while substitution is full of grace, it is not unnatural, but according to the laws of everlasting love. Yet there is a fourth consideration that may remove the difficulty of sin being laid upon Christ. It is not only that God laid it there, that Jesus voluntarily took it, and more-

over was in such a union with his church that it was natural that he should take it, but you must remember that *this plan of salvation is precisely similar to the method of our ruin.* How did we fall, my brethren? Not by any one of us actually ruining himself. I grant you that our own sin is the ground of ultimate punishment, but the ground of our original fall lay in another. I had no more to do with my fall than I have to do with my restoration; that is to say, the fall which made me a sinner was wholly accomplished long before I was born by the first Adam, and the salvation by which I am delivered was finished long before I saw the light by the second Adam on my behalf. If we grant the fall,—and we must grant the fact, however we may dislike the principle,—we cannot think it unjust that God should give us a plan of salvation based upon the same principle of federal headship. Perhaps it is true, as has been conjectured by many, that because the fallen angels sinned one by one, there was no possibility of their restoration; but man sinning, not one by one in the first place, but transgressing under a covenant head, there remained an opportunity for the restoration of the race by another covenant headship. At any rate we, accepting the principle of the federal headship in the fall, joyfully receive it as to the restoration in Christ Jesus. It seems right, then, on these four grounds, that the Lord should make the sins of all his people to meet upon Christ.

4. I beg you to observe in the fourth place, *that lying upon Christ brought upon him all the consequences connected with it.* God cannot look where there is sin with any pleasure, and though as far as Jesus is personally concerned, he is the Father's beloved Son in whom he is well pleased; yet when he saw sin laid upon his Son, he made that Son cry, "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" It was not possible that Jesus should enjoy the light of his Father's presence while he was made sin for us; consequently he went through a horror of great darkness, the root and source of which was the withdrawing of the conscious enjoyment of his Father's presence. More than that, not only was light withdrawn, but positive sorrow was inflicted. God must punish sin, and though the sin was not Christ's by his actually doing it, yet it was laid upon him, and therefore he was made a curse for us. What were the pangs which Christ endured? I cannot tell you. You have read the story of his crucifixion. Dear friends, that is only the shell, but the inward kernel who shall describe? It is certain that Christ not only bore all that humanity could bear, but there was a Deity within which added extraordinary strength to his humanity, and enabled it to bear far more than it would otherwise have been able to endure. I doubt not that in addition to this the Godhead within gave a peculiar sensitiveness to the holiness of Christ's nature, so that sin must have become even more abhorrent to him than it would have been to a merely perfect man. His griefs are worthy to be described according to the Greek Liturgy as "unknown sufferings." The height and depth, the length and breadth of what Jesus Christ endured nor heart can guess, nor tongue can tell, nor can imagination frame; God only knows the griefs to which the Son of God was put when the Lord made to meet upon him the iniquity of us all. To crown all there came death itself. Death is the punishment for sin, and whatever it may mean, whatever over and beyond natural death was intended in the sentence, "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die,"

Christ felt. Death went through and through him, until "he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost." "He became obedient to death, even to the death of the cross."

5. Dear friends, for a moment think of the result of all this. Sin meets on Christ and Christ is punished for sin, and what then? Why then sin is put away. If the penalty be endured justice asks no more. The debt discharged—there is no debt; the claim made and the claim met —the claim ceases to be. Though we could not meet that claim in our proper persons, yet we have met it in one who is so united and allied to us that we are in him even as Levi was in the loins of Abraham. Jesus himself also is free. Upon him the gathered tempest has spent itself, and not a single cloud lingers in the serene sky. Though the waters came his love has dried them up, his suffering has opened the sluices, and made the floods for ever spend themselves. Though the bills were brought he has honoured them all, and there is not one outstanding account against a single soul for whom he died as a substitute.

6. We cannot close the exposition of this verse without just remarking upon the "*us*" here intended. "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of *us* all." It is usually conceded by us who hold the doctrine of particular redemption that there was in the death of Christ very much of generality and universality. We believe that the atonement of Christ was infinite in value, and that if Christ had decreed to save every man of woman born, he need not have suffered another pang; there was sufficient in his atonement if he had so willed it to have redeemed the entire race. We believe also that by the death of Christ there is a general and honest invitation given to every creature under heaven in terms like these:—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." We are not prepared, however, to go an inch beyond that. We hold that from the very nature of the satisfaction of Christ it could not have been made for any but for his elect; for Christ either did pay the debts of all men or he did not; if he did pay the debts of all men they are paid, and no man can be called to account for them. If Christ was the surety of every man living, then how in the name of common justice is Christ to be punished, and man punished too? If it be replied that the man would not accept the atonement, then I ask again, Was there a satisfaction given, for if so it was given whether the man accepts it or not, or else satisfaction by itself is powerless until man puts efficacy in it, which is preposterous to suppose. If you take away from us the fact that Christ did really satisfy for those for whom he stood, we cry like Jacob, "If I am bereaved I am bereaved;" you have taken away all that is worth having, and what have you given us in its place? You have given us a redemption which confessedly does not redeem; you have given us an atonement which is made equally for the lost in hell and for the saved in heaven; and what is the intrinsic value of such an atonement? If you tell us that Christ made a satisfactory atonement for every one of the human race, we ask you how it was that he made an atonement for those that must have been in the flames of hell thousands of years before he came into this world? My brethren, ours has the advantage of universality in its proclamation and in its *bonâ fide* offer, for there is no man living who shall believe in Jesus who shall not be saved by Christ; but it has a greater advantage than

this; namely, that those who do believe are saved by it, and they know that Christ made such an atonement for them that for them to be punished for sin would be as much a violation of justice as it would of mercy. O my soul! thou knowest this day that all thy sins were made to meet on Christ, and that he bore the punishment for them all.

"He bore that we might never bear,
His Father's righteous ire."

Here is a rock to stand on, a safe resting-place for those who trust in Jesus. As for you who trust him not, your blood be upon your own heads! If ye trust him not, ye have no part nor lot in this matter, ye shall go down to your own punishment to bear it yourselves; the wrath of God abideth on you; you shall find that the blood of Jesus has made no atonement for your sins. You have rejected the invitation that was given, and put far from you the cross of Christ, and upon your heads the pardoning blood shall never drop, and for you it shall never plead, but you must perish under the law, seeing you refuse to be saved under the gospel.

II. Let us come briefly to the APPLICATION.

Dear hearer, a friend now puts a question to you. There is a countless company whose sins the Lord Jesus bore; *did he bear yours?* Do you wish to have an answer? Are you unable to give one? Let me read this verse to you and see if you can join in it. I do not mean join in it saying, "That is true," but feeling that it is true in your own souls. "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." If there be in you this morning a penitential confession which leads you to acknowledge that you have erred and strayed like a lost sheep, if there be in you a personal sense of sin which makes you feel that you have turned to your own way, and if now you can trust in Jesus, then a second question is not wanted; the Lord hath laid on him your iniquity, and the iniquity of all such as confess their sin and look alone to Christ. But if you will not trust to Christ, I cannot say to you that the Lord hath taken the sin from you and laid it upon Christ, for in my soul I know that living and dying as you now are, that sin of yours will rise up in judgment against you to condemn you. Dear friend, I will venture to say to you, are you reconciled to God's way of getting rid of sin? Do you feel any joy in your heart at the thought of Jesus bearing sin for you and suffering for you? If you do not, I cannot offer you the consolation which the text gives to those who submit to it. But let me ask you, do you mean to bear your sin yourself? Do you know what that means? Jesus smarted when he bore the sin of his people, but what a smart shall yours be when you bear your own! "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." There are some now-a-days who are mightily angry at the doctrine of everlasting punishment; I, too, might be angry at it if it were an invention of man; but when it is most certainly threatened in God's Book, it is vain for me to kick against the pricks; my question should not be, "How can I dispute against it?" but "How can I escape from it?" Dear hearer, do not venture into God's presence with your sins upon yourself; even our God is a consuming fire, and his fury will break forth against you when you come to stand there.

Have you an imagination that your own merits may make atonement for sin? I pray you think what Christ had to do before he could cast sin off from himself, what griefs he bore, through what an ocean of wrath he passed; and do you think that your poor merits, if they be merits, can ever avail to do what the Saviour suffered so much to accomplish? Do you hope to escape without a punishment? If you do, let me pray you to think the matter over; for if God smote his own Son, do you think he will permit you to go scot free? If the King of Glory, when he only takes others' sins upon him, must needs die, what think you will become of you, poor worm of the dust? Think you that God will be unjust in order to save you? Do you suppose that he will be hail fellow, well met! with you, and revoke his own sentence, because you do not choose to be saved by a plan which is both just to him and safe to you? Shall God be unjust to pander to your fancies, or indulge your lusts? Sinner, bow the knee to this plan of salvation, for be it known to you—and I speak now, knowing what I say, and coolly too—there is none other plan of salvation under heaven. There may be other ways of salvation preached, but other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, Jesus Christ the Righteous. If thou shalt struggle after salvation individually, and hope to get to heaven apart from the headship of Christ, thou mayest struggle, but thou shalt be like the Jews of old, who had a zeal for God but not according to knowledge; if thou shalt be going about to establish thine own righteousness, but not submitting thyself to the righteousness of Christ, thou shalt perish. But let me ask thee, does not this plan commend itself to thee? If I trust Jesus, this is to me the evidence that he took my sins and suffered in my stead. Oh the joy it gives me! I speak to you honestly of my own experience now; there is no doctrine that fires my soul with such delight as that of substitution. The doctrine of atonement, as it is often preached, is a hazy, misty doing of something by which the law is honoured, or perhaps dishonoured, for I scarce know which to call it; this yields me no joy; but when I know that Christ was literally and positively, not metaphorically and by way of figure, but literally and positively the substitute for his own people, and when I know that trusting in him I have the evidence of being one of his people, why my soul begins to say, Now let me live! I'm clean, through Jesu's blood I'm clean. Now let me die! for I shall boldly stand in the day of resurrection, through Jesus my Lord. Why, soul, it seems to me as if it were enough to make you leap into the arms of Christ, crucified! covered with blood for you! disinterestedly suffering for his own enemies that they might live! Oh stay not away!

"Come, guilty souls, and flee away
Like doves to Jesu's wounds;
This is the welcome gospel-day,
Wherein free grace abounds.

God loved the church, and gave his Son
To drink the cup of wrath;
And Jesus says he'll cast out none
That come to him by faith."

III. Now consecrate a few minutes to hallowed CONTEMPLATION.

You do not want talk, you want thought: I will give you four things to think of. The first is *the astounding mass of sin that must have been laid on Christ.* Now do not jump at it, and say, "Yes, the sins of the millions of his elect." Do not leap at that, get at it by degrees. Begin with your own sin. Have you ever felt that?—your own sin. No, you never felt the full weight of it; if you did you would have been in hell. It is the weight of sin that makes hell. Sin bears its own punishment in its own weight. Do you remember when you felt that the pains of hell gat hold upon you, and you found trouble and sorrow? That hour when you called upon the name of the Lord, saying, "O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul!" Then you only felt as it were the little end of your sins, but all your sins, what must they weigh! How old are you? You know not how old you may be before you enter into rest, but all the sins of all your years he carried. All the sins against light and knowledge, sins against law and gospel, week-day sins, Sabbath sins, hand sins, lip sins, heart sins, sins against the Father, sins against the Son, sins against the Holy Ghost, sins of all shapes, all laid upon him; can you get the thought now? Now multiply that. Think of the sins of all the rest of his people; persecutions and murders at the door of such an one as Saul of Tarsus; adultery at the door of David—sins of every shape and size, for God's elect have been among the chief of sinners; those whom he has chosen have not been the best of men by nature, but some of them the very worst, and yet sovereign grace delighted to find a home for itself where seven devils had dwelt before, nay, where a legion of devils held their carnival. Christ looks abroad among the sons of men, and while a Pharisee is passed by, Zaccheus the publican is selected—and the sins of all these with their full weight laid upon him. The weight of sin would have crushed all these into hell for ever, and yet Christ bore all that weight; and what if I venture to say the very eternity and infinity of wrath that was due for all that mass of sin, the Son of God, marvellously sustained by the infinity of the Godhead within, bore and sustained the whole. I would like to stop a minute and let you turn it over, but when you go home perhaps you will spend half an hour very profitably in thinking that

> "The enormous load of human guilt
> Was on my Saviour laid;
> With woes as with a garment he
> For sinners was array'd."

2. The next subject I offer you for contemplation is this, *the amazing love of Jesus which brought him to do all this.* Remember Paul's way of putting it. "Scarcely for a righteous (or strictly just) man will one die; peradventure for a good (or benevolent) man one might even dare to die; but God commendeth his love towards us in that, while we were yet sinners, in due time, Christ died for the ungodly." When Christ has renewed us by his Spirit, there may be a temptation to imagine that some excellency in us won the Saviour's heart; but, my brethren, you must understand that Christ died for us while we were yet sinners. Not that infant washed and swaddled, not that fair maiden with the jewel in her ear, and with the pure golden crown upon her head, not that lovely princess, presented like a chaste virgin to her husband; no, that was not what Jesus saw when he died. He saw all that in the glass of his prescience, but the actual condition of that fair

maid was very different when he died for her; she was cast out, unwashed, unsalted, unswaddled, in her blood, a foul, filthy thing. Ah! my brethren, there is no filthy thing under heaven so filthy as a filthy sinner. When there was not a ray of beauty to be discovered in us, when neither without nor within a single thing could be found to commend us, but we were morally altogether abhorrent to the Holy nature of Christ, then—oh wondrous grace!—he came from the highest heaven that the mass of our sin might meet on him. I met with this question the other day, which seemed a novel one to me. The question was asked thus: "Suppose you had a child that had the leprosy, or some other foul disease. Suppose this dear child of yours was infected and contaminated to the most loathsome degree in every part, till the eyes were blinded and the hands were rotting, and the heart was turning to stone, and the whole body was covered with wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores. Now, suppose there were no cure for this child but for your perfectly sane and healthy soul, suppose it to be such, to be put into that child's body, and for you to bear that child's diseases instead of that child; would you consent to it?" I can suppose a mother's love yielding even to that; but the more disgusted you had been with those putrifying sores, the more terrible would the task become. Now, that only touches the fringe of the work which Jesus did for us when he himself took our sins and bore our sicknesses. Such a wonderful union is there between Christ and the sinner that I venture to say there are some expressions in the New Testament and in the Old with regard to Christ's connection with the sin of man that I would not dare to use except as direct quotations from Holy Writ; but being there you shall see how wondrously the love of Jesus Christ induced him to take upon himself our sad condition and plight. But, oh the love! oh the love! Nay, I will not speak of it; ye must muse upon it. Silence is sometimes the best eloquence; and it will be best for me to say to you, oh the depths of the love of Jesus! unsearchable, past finding out! God over all, blessed for ever, should have laid on him the iniquity of us all!

3. Wonder of wonders that I need another minute to set you thinking on another subject, *the matchless security which this plan of salvation offers.* I do not see in what point that man is vulnerable who can feel and know that Christ has borne his sin. I look at the attributes of God, and though to me, as a sinner, they all seem bristling as with sharp points, thrusting themselves upon me; yet when I know that Jesus died for me, and did literally take my sin, what fear I the attributes of God? There is justice, sharp and bright, like a lance; but justice is my friend. If God be just, he cannot punish me for sin for which Jesus has offered satisfaction. As long as there is justice in the heart of Deity, it cannot be that a soul justly claiming Christ as his substitute can himself be punished. As for mercy, love, truth, honour, everything matchless, Godlike and divine about Deity, I say of all these, "You are my friends; you are all guarantees that since Jesus died for me I cannot die." How grandly does the apostle put it! It seems to me as if he never was worked up by the Holy Spirit to such a pitch of eloquence as when speaking about the death and resurrection of the Saviour, he propounds that splendid question, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" There, where eternal justice sits upon a flaming

throne, the apostle gazes with eye undimmed into the ineffable splendour, and though some one seems to say, "The Judge will condemn," he replies, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth." Can he justify and then condemn us? He justifies those for whom Christ died, for we are justified by his resurrection. How then shall he condemn? And then he lifts up his voice yet again—"Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who sitteth at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." On other grounds a man must feel unsafe, but here he may know himself sure. Go ye that will, and build upon your sandy foundations; run up your superstructures till they are as high as Babel's tower, and tumble about your ears unable to support their own weight; but as for me, my soul shall rest upon this solid rock of substitution; and clinging to the rock with confident resolve, I know that I have no cause for fear since Jesus died for me.

4. Lastly, I desire to give you as a subject for contemplation, and I pray you do not forget it, this question, *What then are the claims of Jesus Christ upon you and upon me?* Brethren and sisters, I have sometimes wished to be eloquent; never when I had a cause to plead in which I was myself involved, but when I have had to speak for Jesus. But indeed, there is no need of eloquence here. Your hearts shall be the pleaders, his agonies shall be the plea. Did our blessed Lord take your sin, my brethren, and suffer all its terrific consequences for you, so that you are delivered. By his blood and wounds, by his death, and by the love that made him die, I conjure you treat him as he should be treated! Love him as he should be loved! Serve him as he should be served! You will tell me that you have obeyed his precepts. I am glad to hear it. Are you sure that you have? "If ye love me, keep my commandments." Have you kept the ordinances as he delivered them? Have you sought to be obedient to him in all respects? In all your Lord's appointed ways have you scrupulously pursued your journey? If you can say this I am not content; it does not seem to me that with such a leader as Christ mere obedience should be all. Napoleon singularly enough had power to get the hearts of men twisted and twined about him; when he was in his wars there were many of his captains and even of his private soldiers who not only marched with the quick obedience of a soldier wherever they were bidden, but who felt an enthusiasm for him. Have you never heard of him who threw himself in the way of the shot to receive it in his bosom to save the Emperor? No obedience, no law could have required that of him, but enthusiastic love moved him to it; and it is such enthusiasm that my Master deserves in the very highest degree from us. It is out of and beyond all categories of law, it is far exceeding all that law ventured to ask, and yet not supererogation for all that, for ye are not under the law but under grace; and ye will do more out of love than ye would have done out of the compulsion of demand. What shall I do for my Master? What shall I do for my Lord? How shall I set him forth? My brethren and sisters, my highest aim before God, next to the conversion of the unconverted among you, is this, that you who do love Christ may really love him and act as if you did. I hope you will never become a dead cold church. Oh may my ministry never help to lull you into such a state as that! If Jesus Christ does

not deserve everything of you he does not deserve anything; you do not know anything of his claims if you do not feel that

"If you could make some reserve,
And duty did not call;
You love the Lord with zeal so great
That you must give him all."

Christ stands for me, oh may I learn to stand for him, and plead for him, and live for him, and suffer for him, and pray for him, and preach and labour for him as he may help me! May I remind you each individually as you all followed your own way, and individually had some sin to increase that burden, pay him individual service? Contribute of your substance to the common work of the church, and do that constantly, and as a matter of delight. Our College which is doing so much service greatly needs, and demands the help of all who love our work, and love the Lord's truth. But in addition to that, do something for yourself, speak for Christ yourself, have some work in hand on your own account. Do, I say again, at all times assist the work of the combined body, for that will be a great work, God being in us as our life and stay, and let no man withhold of his substance from Christ's cause; but still that is not all, he does not ask your pocket only but your heart. It is not the pence, it is the activities of the soul; it is not the shillings and the guineas and so on, but it is your very inmost soul, the core of your spirit. O Christian, by the blood of Jesus devote yourself to him again! In the old Roman battles it sometimes happened that the strife seemed dubious, and a captain inspired by superstitious patriotism would stand upon his sword and devote himself to destruction for the good of his country, and then, according to those old legends, the battle always turned. Now, men and brethren, sisters, every one of you who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, devote yourselves this day to live, to die, to spend, and to be spent for King Jesus. You will be no fool, for no man ever had an ambition more worthy. You will not be devoting yourself to one who does not deserve it. You know how much you owe him; nay, you do not know, to the fullest extent, the depth of your obligation, but you know you owe him all that you have; your escape from hell and your hope of heaven. Follow me this morning in these verses—

"'Tis done, the great transaction's done;
I am my Lord's, and he is mine:
He drew me, and I follow'd on,
Charm'd to confess the voice divine.

Now rest, my long-divided heart;
Fix'd on this blissful centre rest;
With ashes who would grudge to part,
When call'd on angel's bread to feast?

High heaven, that heard the solemn vow,
That vow renew'd shall daily hear;
Till in life's latest hour I bow,
And bless in death a bond so dear."

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah liii.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

ONLY TRUST HIM! ONLY TRUST HIM!

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 26TH, 1881, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off: and they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go show yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed."—Luke xvii. 12—14.

SEVERAL interesting topics might fairly be found in these verses. We see here the abounding fruit of sin, for here were ten lepers in a group, and the abundance of divine power to meet it, for they were all cleansed. So also we see how Christ must come first, and ceremonies second: first the work of grace, and then the outward showing of it. The Lord's tenderness towards outcasts, his attention to prayers from a distance, and his regard for the ceremonial law so long as it was in force, might each one yield an instructive meditation. I have, however, only one thought which I wish to bring under your notice, and to press upon you, perhaps almost to repetition and monotony. That thought I would engrave as with an iron pen upon the hearts and minds of all here present who desire to find eternal salvation. May the Holy Ghost imprint it upon every living soul.

These ten lepers were required by the Saviour to perform an act of faith in him before they had the slightest evidence in themselves that he had wrought a good work upon them. Before they began to feel their foul blood cleansed, before the horrible dryness of leprosy had yielded to healthy perspiration, they were to go towards the house in which the priest lived to be examined by him and to be pronounced clean. They were to exhibit faith in Christ Jesus's power to heal them by going to exhibit themselves as healed, though as yet they were in the same condition as before. They were to start to the place where they should be examined by the priest, believing that Jesus had healed them, or would heal them, though, as yet, they had no internal evidence whatever that their flesh should become as that of a little child. This is the point I wish to dwell upon—that the Lord Jesus Christ bids sinners believe in him, and trust their souls to him, though they may not yet discern in themselves any work of his grace. Just as these men were lepers, and nothing but lepers, so you may be sinners, and nothing but

sinners, and yet you are bidden to exhibit faith in Jesus Christ while you are just what you are. As these men were to start straight away to the priest with all their leprosy white upon them, and to go there as if they felt they were already healed, so are you, with all your sinnership upon you, and your sense of condemnation heavy on your soul, to believe in Jesus Christ just as you are, and you shall find everlasting life upon the spot. This is my point, and it is of the first importance. Sinners, as sinners, are to believe in Jesus for everlasting life. The voice to each one of them is, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee life."

Now, first, I shall notice *what signs are commonly looked for by unconverted men as reasons for believing in Christ;* which, indeed, are no reasons at all: then, secondly, I shall try to show *what is the real ground and reason for faith in Christ;* and, thirdly, *what will be the issue of a faith in Christ similar to that of the lepers.*

I. First, then, I say that we are to believe in Jesus Christ—to trust him to heal us of the great disease of sin—though as yet we may have about us no sign or token that he has wrought any good work upon us. We are not to look for signs and evidences within ourselves before we venture our souls upon Jesus. The contrary supposition is a soul-destroying error, and I will try to expose it by showing WHAT ARE THE SIGNS THAT ARE COMMONLY LOOKED FOR BY MEN.

One of the most frequent is *a consciousness of great sin,* and a horrible dread of divine wrath, leading to despair. Strange to say, we constantly meet with persons who say, "I could believe in Jesus Christ if I felt more burdened by a sense of sin. I could trust him if I were driven more entirely to despondency and to despair; but I am not depressed enough; I am not broken-hearted enough; I am sure I am not brought low enough, and therefore I cannot trust Christ." Strange notion, that if the night were darker we should see the better! Strange idea, that if we were nearer death we should have better hope of life! Now, my friend, you are speaking and acting in distinct disobedience to Christ; for he would have you trust himself, not on the ground of your feeling much or little, or on the ground of your feeling anything at all, but simply because you are sick and he has come to heal you, and is abundantly able to work your cure. If you say, "Lord, I cannot trust thee unless I feel this or that," then you, in effect, say, "I can trust my own feelings, but I cannot trust God's appointed Saviour." What is this but to make a god out of your feelings, and a saviour out of your inward griefs? Is your own heart to save you by its dark insinuations against divine love? Is unbelief, after all, to bring you salvation because you refuse to believe your God? And despair—wicked despair, which gives the lie to God—is that to be trusted in, and not the Saviour whom God has sent into the world to save sinners? Is there, then, a new gospel, and does it run, "He that denies the power of Jesus and despairs of his love shall be saved"?

You know that Jesus justifies the ungodly, and cleanses the wicked from their sin through his precious blood; and though you know this to be true, you say, "I cannot trust the Crucified, I cannot rely upon his full atonement unless I feel my guilt to be unpardonable, and disbelieve my God." I pray that you may never feel as you foolishly

think you ought to feel; for feelings of despair dishonour the Lord and vex his Spirit, and certainly cannot be good for you. It comes to this —that you are making a god of your despair, and a Christ out of your horrors, and so you are setting up an antichrist in the place where Christ alone should be. Come, young friend, though you have not been terrified and alarmed and heart-broken to the extent of some, will you trust Christ with your soul, and ask no questions? I pray you, trust Jesus once for all.

"Cast thy guilty soul on him,
Find him mighty to redeem;
At his feet thy burden lay;
Look thy doubts and cares away;
Now by faith the Son embrace;
Plead his promise, trust his grace."

That is the point. Can you trust Jesus? for that is what he bids you do. How strange it seems that anyone should raise a question about trusting HIM! How insane and insulting to be willing to trust our feelings and not trust the Saviour! These ten lepers felt no change whatever wrought upon them when Jesus bade them go off to be examined by the priest; yet away they went, and as they went they were made whole. Trust Jesus Christ just as you are, without those feelings which you have hitherto supposed to be necessary as a sort of preparation. Trust him at once, and follow him, and he will make you whole before you have taken many steps in the path of faith and obedience. O Lord God, lead all my hearers and readers to trust thy Son at once.

Many other persons think that they must, before they can trust Christ, experience *quite a blaze of joy*. "Oh," says one, "I heard a Christian say that when he found the Saviour he was so happy that he did not know how to contain himself, and he sang like a whole band of music in one—

'Happy day, happy day,
When Jesus washed my sins away.'

Oh that I could be as full of joy as these 'happy day' people!" Just so. But what mischief will you make out of that? Are you going to find evil even in our delights? Will you feed your unbelief on the joy of the Lord? What strange perversity! "Why," you say, "must I not be happy before I can believe in Christ?" What? What? Must you needs have the joy before you exercise the faith? How unreasonable! Because we tell you that such and such a root produces a sweet fruit, will you say that you must have the fruit before you will accept the root? Surely that is bad reasoning. We who have experienced this joy came to Christ in order to obtain it, and did not wait until we found it, or else we should have waited until now. We came to Jesus just as we were: some of us were very wretched, but we came just as we then were, and we trusted Christ, and we were made whole. Then followed joy and peace; but if we had waited till we felt joy and peace before we came, we should have been standing out against the gospel plan, which is, that men are to trust the Saviour before they feel the slightest benefit from him. O sinner, is not this common sense? Must

we not take medicine before we are cured by it? must we not eat bread before it removes our hunger? Must we not open our eyes before we see? Before the Lord Jesus has either comforted you or healed you consciously, you are to come and just do what he bids you, and trust in him to save you. Neither the gloom of horror nor the blaze of delight is to be looked for before faith, but faith is to precede all and that faith is a simple, humble reliance upon Christ.

We have known others who have expected *to have a text impressed upon their minds.* A kind of superstition has grown up that a special scripture must, somehow or other, hover over the mind, and continue there, so that you cannot get rid of it, and then you may hope that you are saved. In old families there are superstitions about white birds coming to a window before a death, and I regard with much the same distrust the more common superstition that if a text continues upon your mind day after day you may safely conclude that it is an assurance of your salvation. I hope I have never taught you to draw any such a conclusion. Far be it from me to assist you into a confidence which has so questionable a foundation. The Spirit of God often does apply Scripture with power to the soul; but this fact is never set forth as the rock for us to build upon. Will you find anything in the Bible to support the supposition that the vivid recollection of a text is a seal of conversion? It has often happened that some word of God does greatly comfort the soul; but why should you demand the same? Have you any right to say, "I will not believe God's word unless he impresses it upon me"? Is it a lie, then? "No, it is true," say you. Remember, if it is not true, an impression upon your mind would not make it true, and if it is true, why do you not believe it? If it is true, accept it. If there be any force about a promise, pray God to make you feel its force and power; but you ought to feel its force and power, and if you do not, sin lies at your door. As a reader of the Scriptures you must not fall into the idea that you are to wait till some Scripture burns its way into your soul; but you must read attentively, and believe what the Lord God says to you. Furthermore, I would have you remember, it is not reading the Scripture that saves you; it is believing in Christ. What did Christ himself say? He said to the Bible readers of his day, "Ye search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life; but ye will not come unto me that ye might have life." Good as the searching of Scripture is, it is nothing without coming to Christ. You will only read your own condemnation in the Bible if you remain out of Christ. Even the Bible itself may be made into a stumbling-block if you substitute Bible-reading for closing in with Christ and putting your trust in him. Your immediate business is to trust Jesus, and no measure of reading will compensate for neglect of faith. What if no special text of Scripture were ever laid home to your heart at all, yet here it stands, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." That is your business, my dear hearer, if you are to get peace at once; and I earnestly hope that some of you are going to get it before this sermon is over. I have asked your souls of my God, and I have got them for a prey to-night. They shall be David's spoil, and you shall be led in chains of grace to Jesus. Who among you will put his trust in Jesus? for, if you do so,

you shall surely find eternal salvation the moment you believe in his dear name.

There is another way in which some men try to get off believing in Christ, and that is, they *expect an actual conversion to be manifest in them before they will trust the Saviour.* Now, understand that Christ has wrought salvation in no man who is unconverted. There must be a perfect turning round of us—a complete conversion from sin to holiness. But that *is* salvation, and not a preparation for salvation. Conversion is the manifestation of Christ's healing power. But you are not to have this before you trust him; you are to trust him for this very thing. When a man with a disease goes to an eminent physician, does he say, "Doctor, I will trust you with my case when I have reached a certain stage"? "Nay," says the physician, "if you have reached that state you will be in a fair way of healing, and you won't want me." Your wisest plan is to go to your physician just as you are; and if you can be sure that he is an infallible healer, just put yourself into his hands as if you knew nothing, and he knew everything, and as if you would not have a will or way in it, but would leave yourself entirely with him. That is the thing to do with the Lord Jesus, the infallible Physician of the souls of men. Why, you poor wretched sinner, you say, "I am not a saint. I cannot be saved." Who said you were a saint? It is Christ's work to make you into a saint. "Oh, but I do not repent as I should." It is Christ's work to make you repent as you should, and to him you must come for repentance. "Oh, but my heart won't break." It is Christ who is to break your heart—not you who are to break it, and then come to him with it ready broken. Come to Jesus just as you are, with your hard, stony, senseless heart, and trust that and everything else to his saving power. "I do not seem even to have a strong desire," says one. Christ himself gives every spiritual desire by his Holy Spirit. He is a Saviour that begins the alphabet of mercy at A. He does not ask you to get as far as B, C, D, and promise then to meet you; but he begins at the beginning. The good Samaritan when he found the man beaten by the thieves came *where he was.* That is what Jesus does. He does not say, "Now, then, you wounded man, get up, and come to me, and I will pour the oil and wine into you." No; but he goes where the wounded one lies in utter helplessness, stoops over him, removes his rags, cleanses his wounds, pours in the oil and wine, and lifts him up, and bears him to the house of mercy. Poor soul! My Master is not a half Saviour, but a whole one; and if you are lying at the gates of death, hard by the doors of hell, he is as able to save you as if you were sitting on the doorstep of heaven. Just where you are, and as you are, trust Christ to save you, and you shall be saved. Do not look for conversion first, but expect it as the result of faith.

We have known some who have had a very curious idea, which I can hardly put into words, namely, that if they were to be saved they would *experience some very singular sensation.* They could believe in Christ if they felt in a mysterious fashion. It is rather difficult to understand people, but when I have been talking to some enquirers I have thought that they expected even a physical sensation—a sensation within their bodies. I remember one saying to me, "Sir, I was quite sure I was saved, for I felt so light." Poor simpleton, what does it matter whether

you felt light or heavy! What has that to do with it? Perhaps you were light-headed, or half out of your mind with absurd excitement. Beware of such nonsense. To feel light may be interpreted into being weighed in the balances and found wanting; it is a sensation which may frighten as much as console. "Oh," says one, "but I felt so singular." Yes, and many who are now in Bedlam could say the same. What does it matter what you felt? It is not feeling that will save you. Believing on Jesus will bring you the blessings of grace; but strange feelings may be produced by what you have eaten, or by the weather, or by hysteria, or a hundred other things. Do you not know that when politics are being discussed, or when some other subject is under dispute, an earnest orator will often stir men with excitement till their flesh creeps? But what of that? Excitement does not save anybody. Many are melted to tears by a novel or a play; but what is the benefit? You may be moved with religious excitement, and half the emotion may be purely physical, and there may be nothing of the grace of God in it. The wiser way is calmly to sit down and say, "Here is God's way of salvation—salvation through his crucified Son, Jesus Christ; and he has promised that if I trust his Son he will save me from sinning, and make a new man of me, and heal me of my spiritual diseases. I will trust him, for I am sure that the witness of God is true." By that simple and deliberate act of faith you are saved; the power to believe your God is the evidence that the cure has begun, and begun well. If you have, indeed, trusted him, Jesus has undertaken your case, and he will save you.

The very fact that you can and do believe has within it the essential force by which you will be delivered from the alienation of your mind. He that believes God is no longer an enemy to him. Those whom we trust we soon learn to love. This, you see, demands no singular sensation or excitement; this is plain and clear enough. "But must we not be born again?" says one. Yes, truly; and he that believes in Christ is born again. Though as yet he knows it not, the first mark of life is within his soul, for the first sure token of spiritual life is trusting Jesus Christ alone. The best evidence is not trusting marks, signs, evidences, inward feelings, impressions, and so on; but just getting out of that and trusting Jesus. There lies the essence of the saving change, the getting from self to the Lord God in Christ Jesus. A certain mariner has a fine anchor, one of the best constructed anchors ever used in the navy. He has it on board his ship, and yet it is not a pennyworth of use to him. While he has it on board his ship it does not answer the purpose of an anchor: his vessel drifts with the anchor on board. He drags it out upon the deck and looks at it. What an anchor! Would not that hold in the day of storm? He admires his anchor as if it were a mass of gold. The winds howl and the waves roar, but he feels safe with his anchor on board. Fool, this anchor is of no use to you while you can see it. A ship's anchorage cannot be in the ship itself. "Suppose I hang the anchor from the side of the vessel." It is of no use there. What must you do with it? Fling it overboard. Let it down into the deep, even to the sea-bottom. It is gone. You cannot see where it is. All right! That will do. Now, soul, fling your anchor of trust overboard. Do not let it hang to your feelings,

or to your impressions, or to anything that is in you; but overboard let it go, deep into the waters of infinite love, and let it get a grip on Jesus. Outside of you your hope must be; for as long as your confidence is within you, or has any dependence upon yourself, it is like an anchor on board, which can only increase the weight of the ship, but certainly cannot help it in the day of storm. There is the truth. God grant you grace to accept it.

II. And now, secondly, and as briefly as I can, I want to bring forward WHAT THE REASON IS FOR OUR BELIEVING IN JESUS CHRIST. What warrant have I, as a sinner, for trusting myself with Jesus Christ?

No warrant whatever within ourself need be looked for. The warrant for our believing Christ lies in this—first, there is *God's witness concerning his Son Jesus Christ.* God, the Everlasting Father, has set forth Christ "to be the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sin of the whole world." God the Father says to men, "I am able to forgive you justly through the death and righteousness of my Son. Trust me, and I will save you." What do you want more than that? He that believeth not hath made God a liar, because he hath not believed his witness concerning his Son. Why, surely, if God declares a thing, you do not need further evidence. "Let God be true, and every man a liar." What can be firmer than the voice of God, who cannot lie? Beloved hearers, I feel as if I really ought not to bring any other evidence before you. It looks so like insulting the Lord by trying to defend him, as if his perfect truth needed my testimony to support it. Angels never doubt God. Those bright and glorious beings never suspect their Maker. Worms of the dust! Worms of the dust, how can you doubt the God that made you? Oh, let it not be so. And when his testimony is that he is a God ready to pardon the guilty, waiting to forgive all those that trust his Son, why should we doubt such a gracious declaration? My soul, I charge thee trust thy Saviour, and raise no further question, but let the matter be assured and established within thee.

The next warrant for our believing is *Jesus Christ himself.* He bears witness on earth as well as the Father, and his witness is true. Consider who this Christ is whom we are bidden to trust. Look at his person. He is God, "very God of very God." Can we doubt him? He is perfect man, and he has taken perfect manhood upon himself for our sakes. Can we doubt him? He has lived a perfect life. When did he ever lie? Who can charge him with falsehood? He has died "the just for the unjust, to bring us to God"; and God has accepted the sacrifice of his dear Son. What surer proof of his truthfulness can he give us than his death for us? O trembler, why wilt thou refuse thy confidence to one so worthy of it? Canst thou doubt Calvary? Wilt thou despise the cross? Wilt thou say, "I want some other warrant for trusting Christ besides his own person and his finished work"? I feel ashamed almost to be pleading here for such a thing as this. Tell me wherein my Lord was ever false. O sons of men, tell me when once he refused to receive a sinner that came to him. You know that he is risen from the dead, and that he has gone into heaven, and sitteth now at the right hand of God, and will shortly come, and

dare you treat him as a mere pretender? Can you not trust in him? Can you dare distrust him? Do you want signs and wonders over and above those which are in himself? If one should rise from the dead you would not believe, if you do not believe Jesus, for you have more than Moses and the prophets, when you have Christ himself risen from the dead. Will you not trust him? I would like to get you by the hand, my brother, and put it personally to you,—Do you mean it, that you suspect my Saviour and cannot trust your soul with him? Do you mean it? Nay, with tears I do entreat you, do not treat him so badly, but cast your soul on him at this instant, and believe him just as you are, and he will save you. He will not run back from his word, but he will wash out your guilt in his own blood if you will consent to be cleansed.

Still, to put this in another shape, you want to know why you are to believe: your warrant for believing lies in the fact that *God commands you to believe.* "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." And this commandment we have received from our Master—that we preach this gospel unto every creature under heaven: and we do preach it in his name, commanding you in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, that ye believe in him. This divine command is warrant enough for you. If God commands you to do it, you need not say, "May I do it?" Nobody can want any permission to keep the law: the command includes a permit. When the law of the gospel comes from God himself, dear hearer, what is there to do but to obey it and believe at once? The door is open, enter. The feast is spread, eat. The fountain is filled, wash.

Moreover, there is *the promise* made to you and to every creature, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "He that believeth in him is not condemned." Do you hear that? "He that believeth in him hath everlasting life." He has eternal life, he has it now. These are promises rich and free for you. What more do you want? Oh, I know not what more I can say,—when Jesus commands you, when Jesus invites you, how can you stand back? O blessed Spirit, make this plain to men and lead them to believe.

I will add only this one more thing: I dare say these poor lepers believed in Jesus because *they had heard of other lepers whom he had cleansed.* Now, here stands one before you, a representative of many more in this place, who, if this were a fit time, would stand up and say the same. I came to Jesus full of sin, guilty and lost, with a hard heart and a heavy spirit; and I looked to him, trusting him alone to save me; and he has saved me. He has changed my nature, he has blotted out my sin, and he has made me love him, and love all that is good and true and generous, for his sake. It is not I, even I, that am left alone to tell you; but, as I have said, there are thousands in this Tabernacle, at this very hour, upon whom the same miracle of divine mercy has been wrought. Therefore trust my Lord Jesus, and you shall feel the same miracle wrought upon you. Where are you, friend, you who want so much persuading for your own good? If I have money to give away I do not find that I have to persuade anybody to have it. Jingle a guinea, and what ears men have! How soon they will rush

where the coin gives forth its golden notes. Give bread away in a cold winter, or even a little soup, how the poor will crowd to get it! But when it is, "Trust Jesus, and your sin shall be forgiven you, and your nature shall be changed, and you shall be saved from sinning, and you shall be made pure and holy," oh, my Master, what are they at that they want calling so often? Men not only require calling, they need compelling to come in.

"Dear Saviour, draw reluctant hearts,
To thee let sinners fly,
And take the bliss thy love imparts,
And drink, and never die."

III. I must now close with the third point, which shall not occupy you many minutes; it is this, WHAT IS THE ISSUE OF THIS KIND OF FAITH THAT I HAVE BEEN PREACHING? This doctrine of "only trust Jesus,"—what does it lead to? This trusting in Jesus without marks, signs, evidences, tokens, what is the result and outcome of it?

The first thing that I have to say about it is this,—that the very existence of such a faith as that in the soul is *evidence that there is already a saving change.* "Oh," say you, "I do not see that. How can it prove that I am a new man because I trust myself with Christ?" Consider a little: it will be an evidence of a saving change already wrought, for it will show that you have come to be obedient to Jesus, and obedient upon a matter which your proud will has long struggled against. Every man by nature kicks against simply trusting in Christ; and when at last he yields to the divine method of mercy it is a virtual surrender of his own will, the ending of rebellion, the establishment of peace. Faith is obedience. Faith is the evidence that the warfare has been ended by unconditional surrender. They said to Jesus in olden times, "What shall we do that we may work the works of God?" and he answered, "This is the work of God—the most godlike work that ye can do—that ye believe on Jesus Christ whom he hath sent." It is even so: in one sense faith is not a work at all, and in another sense it is the grandest of all works. Here is where God and you are at issue, this is the central point of the quarrel: you want to be saved by something in yourself, but God says that he will save you if you trust in Christ. Now, if you do trust Christ just as you are, it will be an evidence that you have been made obedient to God, and so obedient that a complete, deep-seated, radical renewal of your nature has evidently taken place.

It will be an evidence, also, that you are humble; for it is pride that makes men want to do something, or to be something, in their own salvation, or to be saved in some wonderful way, that they may tell other people how wonderfully they were saved. When you are willing just to be saved like a poor, good-for-nothing sinner as you are, then you are already saved from pride. I will not compliment you: you are a good-for-nothing wretch of a sinner; and if you will trust Jesus, as a man must do who truly bears that character, it will prove that you are humble, and this will be good evidence that a change has passed over your spirit.

Again, faith in Jesus will be the best evidence that you are reconciled to God, for the worst evidence of your enmity to God is that you do not like God's way of salvation. You so much dislike God that you will not have heaven on God's terms. You, the sinner, are so much at war with God that you will go to hell rather than be saved in God's way. That is what it comes to. And when you give that up and say, "Lord, so long as I can be made whole—so long as I can be made to love thee—I am willing to be saved anyhow," there will be evidence of a great change in you. When you cry, "Lord, I will be saved in thine own way, and I will therefore trust Christ as thou hast bidden me," then God and you are reconciled upon a point of the chief importance. There is no battle between you now, for you are of one mind about trusting Christ. God has trusted his honour in Christ's hands, and you are trusting your soul in his hands, so that God and you are now agreed to honour Jesus. The moment you have trusted Christ, that simple thing becomes in itself a distinct admission and indisputable proof that a great change has been wrought in your relation to God, and in your feelings in reference to him.

Now, mark you, before long, sooner or later, *you will become delightfully conscious of the fact that you are saved.* Many a man is saved, and for a time he questions the truth of the gracious work, but in due time the blessing is made clear to him. When a man trusts Jesus as these ten lepers did, and acts upon his trust, good always comes of it. See the ten men! They are going towards the priest, though they have not yet felt that they are healed. They are acting upon Christ's authority, and he will not make fools of them, for they that trust in him shall not be ashamed nor confounded. They must start on their walk before they feel the healing; but as they are going they shall feel it. And you, too, trusting Christ without any sense of any good thing, shall not be long before you shall feel his blessed power upon your heart. I wish to speak my own experience simply to help those who are coming to Jesus. While I was coming to Christ I did not know that I was coming; and when I looked to Christ, I scarcely knew whether it was the right sort of look or no; but when I felt at last that Jesus had healed me, then I knew what I had done. Many a blessing God has given me as to which I have not found out that I had it till some time after my reception of it. I have read the feelings of certain good men, and I have said, "I wish I felt like them"; and some time after, when I looked back, I perceived that I was actually moving in their orbit, and passing through the self-same experience. Many a man wishes he was humble, and he is humble because he does not think he is humble. Many a person sighs, "I wish I had a tender heart," but I am sure that his heart is tender because he mourns its hardness. He longs to be deeply sensitive before the Lord, but it is clear that he has a tenderness which he does not himself recognise. His ideal of tenderness is very high, and properly so, and therefore he dreads falling short of it. O my dear friend, if you trust Jesus in the dark, you shall one day enter into the light; and if you never should enjoy comfort you would still be safe—if all the way between this place and heaven you should never have a consciousness of being saved, yet if you have trusted Christ, you must and shall be saved, for he cannot possibly allow faith in him to be exercised

in vain. Ere long, if you trust Jesus, you shall know his love. Trust him as you sink and you shall swim. Trust him as you feel yourself dying and you shall live. If you trust him before you feel any work of grace upon you, you shall soon discover that there was a work upon you, though you discerned it not. If you trust the Lord you are already the subject of a divine power, for nothing short of omnipotent grace could have led you to believe and live. The state and act of faith are simplicity itself; but to bring us into that simplicity God himself must new create us.

To put all in one, if you are ready to come to Christ, and trust him without any miracles, signs, or evidences, but will simply trust *him* alone, you have within you a power which will carry you through life, and preserve you in holiness even to the end. This morning I spoke about David's encouraging himself in God.* When Ziklag was burnt, and his wives were gone, and his men talked of stoning him, he fell back on God alone. This is a high attainment, and yet it is one which has its parallel in the very dawn of faith in the sinner. It is a grand start in life for you, a poor sinner, to begin by trusting Christ alone, saying, "I, without anything good in me whatever, without anything that I can lay hold of as a hope for me, do cast myself, whether I sink or swim, upon Christ Jesus the Saviour of sinners, and 'if I perish, I perish.'" This is a glorious beginning. To many a saintly life such a faith in the Lord alone has been a crowning act, and yet you, poor sinner, may exercise this same faith while yet you are a babe in Christ. You will often have to trust in this fashion in future life, and therefore it is well to begin as you will have to keep on. You will be brought, in business, in the family, and in the various trials of life, into such a condition that you will have to exercise a faith just of the same sort as that which you begin with; I would, therefore, have you learn the lesson while you are young. You will have to say, "Though I am weakness itself, and poverty itself, and do not see how I may be provided for, yet as the ravens and the sparrows are fed, so shall I be; and therefore I cast my nakedness upon God for clothing, and my hunger upon God for food, and my very life I cast upon him that he may preserve it to me between the jaws of death." This is grand faith, and you must begin there, for if you do not you have not begun to build on the rock. Your first course must be the live rock, or else all will be insecure. To begin well is half the battle: mind that you get a foundation which can never be moved; for life has many trials, and woe to the man whose foundation fails him.

This is grand faith to die with as well as to live with. Now the curtains are drawn and the light of the sun is shut out, and the voices of friends begin to fail, and the ear is dull, and the eye-strings break. My soul, thou art now about to launch into the unseen world. What wilt thou do now? What, indeed, but faint into the arms of thy Father and thy God! Oh, my dear hearer, if you have learned to trust at the very first because of what Jesus is, and not because of what you are, then you will know how to die; for standing there, in the prospect of the great account, or rather lying there upon the bed, in prospect

* No. 1,606. "Ziklag; or, David encouraging himself in God."

of the Lord's coming, fears will come, and doubts will come, and terrors will come, if you are looking within, or looking back upon your past life and trying to find a reliance there. But if you can say, "My Saviour, into thy hands I commit my spirit: my naked soul I put into thy pierced hands again," then may you breathe your last in peace, knowing whom you have believed, and being persuaded that he is able to keep that which you have committed to him until that day. When John Hyatt lay a-dying, one of his friends said, "Mr. Hyatt, can you trust your soul with Jesus now?" "Man," said he, "trust him with one soul? That is nothing. I could trust him with a million souls if I had them. I know that he is able to save all who trust him." I want you to begin, then, as these poor lepers did, by just taking Christ at his word, and going your way in the strength of that word before you feel any hopeful change within. In this fashion when you come to die you may look out for glory and expect it, though the brilliance has not yet transfigured you; you may look out for the eternal crown, look out for the harp, look out for the face of the Well-Beloved, and the bliss unspeakable, and expect them, even though the clouds gather around you. Before you pass the gates of pearl, or cross the chilly sea, you may enjoy the sight of the beatific vision by an unstaggering faith. Hope that is seen is not hope; but glorious is the faith which seeth him who is invisible, and grasps the substance of the things not seen as yet. By this power I even now anticipate the joys of the upper skies. Try, beloved, to do the same. O for more faith! It will be grand to know all heaven, though you have not seen it and felt it, because you knew and trusted the Lord of heaven. Hitherto you have found the promise true; now trust the Lord for glory as once you trusted him for grace, and you shall find ere long that his richest promises are sure.'

God save you, every one of you, beloved; and may he do so at this very hour, for his dear Son's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON---Luke xvii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—504, 593, 538.

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